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THE
SCHOOL FOR FATHERS;

OR, THE
VICTIM OF A CURSE.

THE
SCHOOL FOR FATHERS;
OR, THE
VICTIM OF A CURSE.
A NOVEL.

CONTAINING
AUTHENTIC MEMOIRS AND ANECDOTES,
WITH
HISTORICAL FACTS.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N:
Printed for G. G. J. and J. ROBINSON, Paternoster-Row.
MDCCLXXXVIII.

T H E

SCHOOL FOR FATHERS.

THE CALAMITIES OF CIVIL WAR, CONTI-
NUED BY ELWINA TO ALFRED.

MR S. Wellers would by no means be left out of the conference, when Mr. Pleydel was to begin his narration concerning his imprisonment, and escape from the hands of his persecutors.

His confinement was of the most rigorous kind, when Congress discovered that to bring him over to their principles was

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totally impossible. Some of these infatuated persons had formerly lived in the habits of friendship with him ; but so zealous now were they in the new cause, that they became his bitterest enemies ; and more especially one who had pledged himself to Congress that he should have sufficient influence over him, to induce him to join their party ; and, from the nature of his late employment, being in possession of such documents from government, as would give them a greater insight into its measures and intentions, his acquiescence was of the utmost consequence to their well doing. Fortunately Mr. Pleydel had notice time enough to destroy several of the government papers, which, had they fallen into their hands, would have been detrimental in an important degree to its operations.

When

When this strenuous advocate for liberty made his attack, which he meant for a *coup de main*, Mr. Pleydel inveighed against his treachery, in so cruelly availing himself of their former intimacy and friendship, to draw him into measures so subversive of their duty to their sovereign, and, as it would prove in the end, of their own happiness, and the rights they enjoyed under the best-formed government in the world. He abjured his acquaintance, and rejected the offer of friendship and protection from men, whom he looked on as movers of sedition, and instigators of rebellion. This language, warm from the heart of an honest man, and a friend of his country, was treated as insolent, and was, perhaps, impolitic in a prisoner. But Pleydel was a man of the strictest honour, and firmly attached to the king and his laws. He,

therefore, expressed his sentiments of contempt for this self-created tribunal of petty tyrants, who, as he said, could only take his life; which he scorned to hold under their dominion, or accept on their base conditions.

“ My life,” said he, when he was brought out before them——“ My life
“ and property are, by the shameful abuse
“ of power, both in your hands—dispose
“ of them as you please, whether by a
“ formal process of your new laws, illegally obtained, or by actual force, or
“ even torture, still you shall find me firm,
“ and, to the last moment of my existence,
“ declaiming against your self-assumed
“ authority, and exulting in my own integrity. We were all born the subjects
“ of one king; from him we have received
“ pro-

“ protection, and we lived happily un-
 “ der his mild reign. Look to the cause
 “ of this innovation of his rights and pri-
 “ vileges ; examine who were the first in-
 “ surgents, and candidly investigate the
 “ principles on which they have formed
 “ themselves into this cabal. Ye seek to
 “ dismember yourselves from your mother
 “ country ; and anarchy, with all its conse-
 “ quent evils, will sooner or later over-
 “ take you. Bear me to bonds or death, it
 “ is equal to me ; but fully not my clear
 “ fame, by believing, for one moment, ye
 “ can convince or intimidate me. I repeat
 “ you may deprive me of life ; but my
 “ honour is my own, and shall never be
 “ taken from me. Heaven only grant, as
 “ a reward for my fidelity to my king, that
 “ my wife and children may be enabled to
 “ hold their faith as strong, and that they

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“ may rejoice in the prospect of death,
“ which will remove them from the habi-
“ tation of evil and tyranny, as I do. I ask
“ that blessing from Heaven !.....Of the
“ disturbers of peace on earth, and the
“ abettors of treason, I ask nothing—I
“ will accept of nothing.”

More enraged than ever, the court remanded him to prison, where the feverities of his treatment were increased ten fold ; nay, to so much rigour they extended, that he requested the hour of his execution might be forwarded, to be rid of the importunity he was daily exposed to, together with the barbarous insults he experienced. Not that he found his fidelity wavering, but it was irksome to him to be forced to confer with such wretches, and to be constrained to listen to their
treas-

treasonable conversation, and abuse of a government and monarch respected by him.

His ears, too, were continually wounded by the accounts they brought him of his wife and family : they told him she joined her intreaties with Congress, that he would at last open his eyes to the true salvation of his country, and aid it to establish a government and dominion of its own. These mean artifices were of little avail.

“ Although,” said he, “ I had not time
 “ to enforce the duties of their station up-
 “ on them, yet I know the principles I
 “ have ever inculcated, have made too
 “ lasting an impression even on the minds
 “ of my children to be erased. Of my
 “ wife, I have not the smallest apprehen-

“ sion. Did I believe she could so far for-
“ get she was born a Briton, I would re-
“ quest her to be brought before me, and
“ these arms, whose greatest happiness it
“ has been to enfold her, should now dash
“ her from me ; that hand, which united
“ me to her, should plunge a dagger in
“ her bosom, ere she should live a traitor,
“ or nourish a race of traitors !”

Finding him still so obstinate, as they styled him, they were seriously determined to make him a public example of their tyrannic power, and a victim to their revenge. But there were still some weighty reasons that operated against their reeking their vengeance on him in the city of Boston, and for that purpose he was removed to Charlestown.

It is hardly possible to conceive the taunts and acrimonious insults he received during his march thither ; he was heavily ironed, and chained to the tail of a cart, decorated with the thirteen stripes, branded with infamous titles, and exposed to a licentious mob—those sacred patrons and preservers of liberty ! When arrived, he was thrown into the common gaol, to await the final decision of his tyrants : here he continued several weeks longer ; whether they could not agree on his mode of punishment, or whether still he had some friends left, who mistakenly meant to preserve his life, at the expence of honour, he could not learn ; but every week the order for his death was countermanded. Many times was he led out for execution (the sentence of which, on his mock trial, was hanging and quarter-

ing), and then fresh orders would conduct him back again to his prison, or rather dungeon. He often observed his keeper would look on him with the utmost compassion; that he not unfrequently dropped a tear when he led him forth to the gibbet, and as he apprehended to death, and the joy that would flash in his eyes when he conducted him back again unhurt. One night, after the hour that it was usual to lock him in the inner cell, the keeper entered his room, and, shutting the door, begged to have a little conversation with him: he lamented the dire necessity he had been under, of treating so respectable a gentleman with such rigour, which, however, he had mitigated as much as possible. Mr. Pleydel thanked him, and declared he thought he had suffered as few hardships as any person so circumstanced; the

FOR FATHERS. IF

the greatest of which was the continual hope of an end being put to his miseries having been so often frustrated. "Have you then ever entertained a hope of escaping?" asked the keeper eagerly. "Yes," answered Mr. Pleydel, "by the wretch's last and best friend, death."

"Oh, Sir," he replied, "I think some way may be yet thought of to preserve you from so cruel a remedy of your sufferings."

"Such as they are," said Mr. Pleydel sternly, "leave me to them, and do not add the insolence of office, to the duty you owe your new masters."

The keeper vindicated himself from the charge of insolence, with a modest firm-

ness, that induced the prisoner to listen to him with more attention than he was first inclined to do. He recollected the looks of the man on the many occasions enumerated, when they were certainly unequivocal. "I have laboured and beat about," continued the keeper, "to find out some sure method of procuring your enlargement from this horrid confinement. Do not think it is merely from disinterested motives that I seek to accomplish this business; it is from the principle of gratitude: you know not my person; but that I am existing, is owing to your goodness and generosity. My family have been, and are still indebted to you for every advantage they enjoy. I would freely die to serve you; and I *will* die to prove the truth of my assertion. Let me intreat you to exchange

“ change dresses with me—follow the di-
 “ rections I shall have the honour of giving
 “ you, and by these means alone you will
 “ escape the hands of your cruel enemies.

“ And what is to become of my generous
 “ benefactor ?” interrupted Mr. Pleydel.

“ No matter ; they can but hang me in
 “ your room,” said he.

“ Pardon me,” replied Pleydel, “ if from
 “ the instances I have so lately received of
 “ the turpitude of human nature, when de-
 “ generated by treason, I, for a moment,
 “ question a zeal so very exalted. Would
 “ you then lose your life to preserve mine ?
 “ Nature would revolt against it, even if
 “ your principles were strong enough to
 “ bear you to an object you now contem-
 “ plate

“plate at a distance. I have long made
“myself familiar with it, and yet the hopes
“of life will cling round the heart, and the
“soul rejoices at continuing the union
“with the body a little longer. Could
“the escape be effected without dan-
“ger to you, or dishonour to my prin-
“ciples, I should greatly err not to embrace
“the opportunity.—Let us consult toge-
“ther. Is there not a possible chance of
“our both sharing the same fate, and mu-
“tually assisting each other?”

They now entered seriously into the mat-
ter, and it was agreed that the keeper the
next night should bring in a dress similar
to and concealed under his own. It had
the desired effect, and as their size was
nearly the same, they passed, one some
time

time after the other, unsuspected by any person.

They met when clear of the town, and pursued their way to the woods, which surround almost every settlement in America.

The fugitives were forced to lie by in the day concealed in the woods, and travel as fast as they could in the interior parts of the country in the night. One morning when they were just going to encamp for the day in a thick plantation, they were beset by four Indians of a very ferocious tribe. They had furnished themselves with fire-arms and ammunition, yet they were unwilling to expose themselves to the necessity of using them, lest their report should cause any alarm in the country. They attempted a treaty with these Indians,

dians, who prepared for a contest with great eagerness. Mr. Pleydel made good use of his fusée without discharging it, and knocked down one of the savages; Clemson, the keeper, followed his example, but was instantly chopped down with a hatchet: his death was immediately revenged by Mr. Pleydel, who, fixing his back against a large tree, shot the miscreant through the head; and then drawing out a pistol, discharged it at the remaining Indian, and brought him to the ground. This was all the work of a moment. On inspection, he found the two Indians were not dead, but stunned with the contusion each had received from the butt ends of the guns. Self preservation urged the necessity of putting an end to their existence; but human nature and compassion pleaded for the two men now unable to defend them-

themselves. The conflict between prudence and mercy was but short ; mercy prevailed. He dragged the bodies, just recovering to life, to the nearest trees, and bound them at some distance from each other, which would prevent their pursuit of him for some time.—Then stripping the dead Indians, he habited himself in their clothing, stained his skin with some berries with which the woods abound, dropped a hasty tear over the fate of his faithful companion Clemson, and set off as fast as he could to some safe retreat. He was fearful of going to any settlement, either of Indians or white men ; so his custom was to lie by whenever he happened to be near any, till the fall of night, when he went onward. All this time he subsisted on what the woods afforded, hardly enough to sustain life. He flattered himself,

himself, if he could reach Albany undiscovered, he might there obtain some intelligence of his wife and children, who he had heard from Clemson were driven from Boston, and possibly they had sought an asylum with his aunt.

Some miles from Tuscarora, he fell in with a party of Indians, whom he found friendly to the white men, and of a neutral tribe. Though they soon discovered he was a white man, yet they expressed no impertinent curiosity, which would have laid him under the necessity of quitting them, or telling more of his history than suited the exigencies of his situation. They journeyed together with very little conversation, till happily they arrived at that spot where the unfortunate Pleydel and Matilda were doomed to meet each other,

other, to compare their several disasters, and to weep over their mutual misfortunes.

Albany was however no abiding place for the fugitive ; even the circumstance of an Indian chief being received and entertained at the house of a widow, would have occasioned a great deal of unpleasant speculation, which it was their interest to avoid as much as possible. It became very necessary to call a council among themselves, and that some plan should be formed, by which, probably, they might make a safe retreat from the danger

danger to which a discovery would infallibly expose them.

The head quarters of the royal army were now at New York ; to that province Mr. Pleydel was most inclined to proceed ; my sister rather wished to quit the fatal continent, and seek refuge in her native country, and the arms of her relations ; she used such powerful arguments in favour of her predilection, that her husband abandoned his former resolution. Indeed he had not much to oppose to her reasoning.

The world was all before them,
Where to chafe.———

He had no possessions, nor could he exercise any profession, as it behoved him to lie concealed ; the fate of the unhappy
contest

contest being as much undetermined as at the beginning, and who should conquer equally uncertain. A proscription had gone forth, both against him and his wife, and a large price set on their heads, whereby he was precluded from applying to any person, lest, under the semblance of friendship, they should be tempted to betray him into the hands of his merciless enemies. Should he reach the army in safety, he might indeed obtain protection while they were victorious, but he stood little chance of support. The posts were all filled ; and, perhaps, it would be only exchanging one place where he should starve, to another where he could not subsist.

As his employment had been in the civil line, and he had, by doing his duty
in

in his station, incurred ruin on himself and family, he hoped, by stating his misfortunes to government, he should meet with relief, at least it was worth the trial.

These matters being arranged, the next step was to put them in execution, and that without delay. My sister, happy in the prospect of once more tasting the blessings of peace in her own land, lost not a moment in making every necessary preparation; but here many difficulties arose sufficient to have overthrown the strongest resolution. There was, however, no alternative—the die was cast, and whether they should succeed or fail depended no longer on themselves; they relied on that Being who had hitherto preserved them, and trusted in his power for all the future.

The night following a small tumbril was engaged to carry the wanderers they hardly knew whither. In this were placed their slender baggage, and the two little children, the eldest only three years of age. The blessings and prayers of Mrs. Wellers attended them, with what succours of provisions and money she could afford them. On mature deliberation they judged it more proper to go to the army at New York, as from thence they stood the best chance of getting shipping to England. Painful and tedious was their journey through thick woods, deep defiles, and mostly an uninhabited country; this last, indeed, was a circumstance they rather rejoiced in, as the countenance of each person they met seemed hostile to their cause, and filled their bosoms with alarms. Sometimes they were obliged to rest whole days, lest
their

their poor beast should be unable to accomplish the march ; the even providing forage for him in a country that had been ravaged by war, was attended with difficulty : for themselves, they barely sustained life, bestowing what they could spare on the poor children, who were much the best off in the whole party, as their infant state rendered them insensible of the dangers and distresses to which their unfortunate parents were hourly exposed. At length, almost spent with fatigue and hard living, they happily reached King's-Bridge ; where the first business of Mr. Pleydel was to send to the commanding officer, with whom he luckily had some acquaintance. Nothing could equal this gentleman's surprise, when, in the persons of an Indian chief and his squaw, he recognized the ——— of America, and his wife.

He received them with great cordiality, and supplied their necessities as well as he could ; but as the army was then striving to bring on an engagement, it was thought better to remove them to New York: they were sent under an escort, and a lodging appointed for them, till some conveyance could be found for their sailing to the mother country.

They took the first opportunity of writing an account of their distressed situation both to government and to my father, with the resolution they had taken, by the advice of their friends, of coming to England as soon as possible. In a few weeks after a vessel laden with merchandize sailed from New York, in which this forlorn family took their passage. Now they began to breathe freely ; in the prospect of being

from the wounds he had received) that it would be the wiser way to strike, and call for quarter.—They were instantly boarded, and the bill of lading called for. One of the American lieutenants inspected the vessel, which he reported to be much injured from the number of shot that had raked her; and almost all her rigging destroyed. They next proceeded to pillage her of every thing valuable, and conveyed it on board their own vessel, which had not suffered a little from the spirit with which the captive ship had engaged her. While they were removing the cargo, a sail came in view, which they perceived to be an English frigate. Its force appeared to be much superior to their own; besides, king's ships are not that kind of game these marauders are in quest of. Security was now their only aim—to accomplish which they piped

all hands on board, and after boring holes in the hull of the unfortunate merchantman (it being too disabled to sail as fast as they wanted), they left the remainder of the wretched crew (taking only a few to supply their own loss) to the mercy of the waves, or rather to a certain death.



Continuation.

Here, as my sister pathetically says in her relation, the distress of the surrounding unfortunate wretches in general, and her own in particular, became too bad for language to describe. Two-thirds of the crew were either killed or wounded, and half of those that remained unhurt were forced on board the privateer, which was

now steering from them with all the sail they could carry. The frigate which had struck terror in the captors, was a great way off, and they could perceive her giving chase to the enemy. No hopes presented themselves to the unhappy creatures, but of getting out the long boat as speedily as possible, as there was no chance of the ship keeping much longer above water. Matilda, resigned to her fate, was supporting her husband, whose wounds had been dressed, and both the children lying on the bed, when a seaman ran into the cabin, bidding them come along that moment if they wished to save their lives, as the ship was sinking, and the long boat would be filled and off before they could get to her. Some others ran in out of compassion, and actually dragged my sister by force away from her husband, whom she was clinging

clinging to.—One man snatched up the children, and threw them, at the hazard of being trampled to death, into the boat. The horror, which now seized poor Matilda at the idea of abandoning her wounded husband, is not to be expressed : she resisted their efforts as long as she could, while Pleydel besought her with the utmost earnestness to consent to her own preservation for the sake of her wretched children, and to leave him to his fate, which a few minutes would decide. Her senses were almost gone, and in a state more dead than alive they lifted her into the boat. She had just recollection enough to know the mate (the captain being killed), who had now the command, and, throwing herself at his feet, implored his interference, that she might not be separated from her dying husband ; if he would not consent to her

returning to the sinking vessel, or mercifully give orders for his being brought thither, she would not survive his destiny, but seek him in the ocean. She actually ran to the boat's side, and would have precipitated herself into the sea, had he not assured her he would lie by, till two sailors had endeavoured to bring Pleydel on board. With great difficulty this task was effected, and she had the satisfaction of seeing her beloved husband, at least in a situation of sharing her fortune bad as it was ; and happily by her means and persuasion (for being the only woman she had perhaps more influence) several of the poor wounded men were lifted on board, who, but for her, would have been left to sink with the ship, which circumstance happened in a very few minutes after they had got in three or four casks of provision, and had
rowed

rowed the boat some distance off: which last was very necessary, lest the influx should have involved them in its vortex.

To add to the measure of their misfortunes, a storm of wind, with thunder and lightning, came on at night, and early the next morning they were driven on shore off St. Mary's on the rocks of Scilly. Here a fresh matter of grief presented itself, for one of the dear little children was dashed to pieces before the eyes of his distracted parents, who were unable to afford him the least succour. With the utmost hazard they at last got on shore, reduced to the lowest pitch of poverty and despair; for what little matter of money they had carried on board with them was now lost, except the trifle each had in their pockets; and clothes they had

none, but those on their backs, as nothing could be saved out of the ship. Persons who look no farther than the bare preservation of their lives, only provide for their sustenance; they think of nothing else. Of the wounded part of the crew, not one escaped to land but Mr. Pleydel; nor would he, probably, but from the hopes of the mate, that as he had filled a public character in America, his name would procure them some advantages from the governor, when his former rank should be made known. This idea, whether well or ill founded, operated in favour of Mr. Pleydel, whose life was preserved in consequence of it. He was carried to a house in the suburbs, being too much exhausted to bear more fatigue; thither my poor sister followed him, pressing her now only child to her bosom,

bosom, and bathing its innocent face with her fruitless tears.

Happily Mr. Pleydel was of the society of free-masons, which was of singular service to him and all his distressed companions. There is a kind of magnetic sympathy, one would suppose, or intuitive prescience among masons; for he instantly discovered the master of the house to be one also, who at the same time expressed that kind of rapture at seeing him, as if they had been intimate friends. The best advice and assistance of all sorts were directly afforded him, and every mason in Scilly flocked to see their brother, and procure him all the comforts in their power.

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There cannot, I think, be a more forcible argument in favour of masonry, than that it unites all the world, as it were, in one family. So many have experienced the advantages resulting from it, that I almost wonder any man should object to belong to one or other of the lodges of that order; particularly those whose professions lead them to travel.

Perhaps you did not expect an advocate for free-masonry in a woman, who is by prescription for ever debarred from being a member. But in my patriotism I forget my sex; and in its real utility overlook its only imperfection, a want of liberality of sentiment, in supposing no woman could preserve its secrets. If I was a man I would undoubtedly be a free-mason. I revere its institution,
though

though a woman ; but yet feel no more inclination to be instructed in its mysteries, than I do in the guidance of the balloon, which is just now the fashionable topic both here and at Paris ; they being equally out of my sphere and character.

But to have done with my observations, and return to the forlorn party at St. Mary's. The wounds of Mr. Pleydel (being much irritated by the various succeeding accidents he had encountered) had thrown him into a violent fever, which lasted five weeks ; during the greater part of that time his life was not expected. At last he did recover slowly, and my sister began to grow very impatient to get to England. As soon as Mr. Pleydel was able to bear motion, and a passage could be procured, they once more committed themselves to the

the

the waves, and in a short time landed at Falmouth; from thence they made the best of their way up to London, to the arms of their almost despairing friends, who had given up all thoughts of ever seeing them again.

Good God! what a meeting it was! I shall never have the scene out of my memory. It would be too touching to expatiate on, particularly too, as I have already been so minute, which I did not intend to be, when I began the relation. I should fear I had almost fatigued you: and indeed nothing but the desire of obliging you in it, could have induced me to enter upon it at all.

Mr. Pleydel lost no time in laying his case before the Minister, who perhaps attended

tended rather more alertly to the business, as my brother's vote was wanted on some particular measure. Government made him an appointment, which although extremely inadequate to his losses, was exceedingly welcome ; and I believe Matilda would gladly have relinquished every prospect of grandeur, for the certainty of passing the rest of her days in a quiet cottage at home. I thought of her when you drew the picture of the Dennisons ; and even wish they were in possession of such a "blest retreat." The ministry, however, thought otherwise for them : and about eighteen months since, Mr. Pleydel was appointed to a very good post in New-York, though by no means so lucrative as that he before possessed.

He

He thought himself too young a man to devote himself entirely to a life of idleness, and perhaps flattered himself that Great Britain would yet subdue her rebellious children, and he should stand a chance of recovering some of his patrimony. America too is his native country, and we have an insensible partiality to a place, simply from having been born there. We talk of being cosmopolites, and citizens of the world, but we still feel, if we do not acknowledge, that there is *one* little spot more dear to us than any other, that we never think of without an emotion, to which we can scarcely give a name; or quit, without casting "a longing, lingering look."

All places, however (in contradiction
to

to my assertion), were equal to my sister; though I am certain her own choice would have led her to remain in England: but she always suited herself to the occasion, and is of a most happy frame of mind, neither meeting, or sinking under misfortunes; still looking forward with hope; and if the prospect is clouded over in this world, so that the visual orb cannot pierce the gloom, she can extend her views beyond it, to that state where virtue and constancy in right doing will most assuredly be rewarded!

Few women have had such occasions for the exertion of fortitude as herself. But had I never heard the relation of her misfortunes, and only had seen what she suffered on the loss of her last, and perhaps most-loved child, which happened by the measles

measles about two months before they left us, I should not have believed it possible she could have supported the many afflictions she had gone through.

The mind is not equally strong at all times. This is a common, but a very true observation, which a slight knowledge of mankind will shew us. My sister was almost worn to a shadow by her anxiety during the illness of the infant, and her grief when it was no more. The troubles she had before experienced, called for extraordinary exertions ; they were uncommon, and of a nature that seldom attacks the generality of persons. Providence might infuse a greater portion of fortitude (as it is said to “temper the wind to the shorn lamb”) to enable her to support herself and others, during those trials.

trials. Her spirits were kept in a state of agitation for a length of time, and every present distress called for resistance, as still worse it was to be dreaded would follow. They had now subsided into a calm, and she formed to herself a life of quietness and mediocrity; devoting the remainder of her days to the making her little dwelling-place pleasing to her husband, and giving up the chief of her time to the education of her only child. This last stroke stole upon her in the hour of fancied security, and found her bosom defenceless. It opened afresh all her wounds; it renewed all her sufferings. "Still is the
"cup of affliction unexhausted!" she cried.—Again she saw each of her darlings expire; again her maternal heart bled at every vein!

We wished Mr. Pleydel would leave her behind him, till he was settled in his new station, and time had softened the asperity of her grief; but this, though he would have consented to, she would not bear the thought of. Our parting was a mournful one; my father and mother now looked on it as eternal, and indeed so we may all, for there is little probability of their ever returning to England: unless, which Heaven forbid, we should lose every thing in America. Fatal contest! unhappy, unnatural war! How much have they to answer for who were the first instigators of it! Surely there is a retribution to be made, and heavy it will fall on some!

And

And now will not Alfred allow I have given him a counterpart to his history of the Dennifons? Alas! I doubt almost every family in that unhappy country might furnish out a mournful story that would but too well accord with those that have fallen more immediately within our knowledge. How long will this fatal delusion continue, that thus divides families, and plunges nations in endless ruin? This unnatural war, carried on by prejudice and faction, how will it read in the annals of history? A child resisting and flying in the face of its parent. A parent perhaps too rigorous in asserting its claim to obedience. It is dreadful for the public: it is still more so for the individual!

I neither

I neither ask or wish to know your political principles. I know your heart is benevolent, and that it sympathizes in the distresses of your fellow creatures, which your hand fails not to relieve to the utmost of your power. These are *traits* which I see, and admire. I glory in saying they are congenial to the sentiments of Elwina. But if I was insensible to those amiable virtues, I should be unworthy to be called the friend of Alfred ! the title I aspire to, and hope ever to retain.

An amiable, sensible and candid friend, is in the place of a second conscience. We feel a wish of acquitting ourselves to them, as if they had a prescient knowledge of all we do. Since I have had the happiness of your acquaintance, I fancy
you

you take an interest in all that concerns me, however trifling or minute. “ I will practise this lesson,” I cry, “ because it is quite in Alfred’s taste. Alfred admired these ribbands; they shall adorn my hat: these are the books he pointed out to me; they shall form a part of my library. This myrtle is sacred to Alfred; can I then omit my care of it? My drawings he has commended; I will not fail to employ such a portion of time as will make me a proficient in that art.” By this kind of mental machinery, Alfred is present with me wherever I go, or however employed. And is he sensible of these “ follies of friendship?” Does the idea of Elwina mix in his studies? Does she accompany him in his evening walks? Why do I make it a question? Has he not said, that even
in

in his sleep, she is the heroine of his dreams? Yes, Alfred, I sometimes dream too. But philosophers say, all this life is but a dream. I wish sometimes it were so indeed. Enough, however, of all this. I am in reality most sincerely yours,

ELWINA.

LET-

L E T T E R XVII.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

HOW shall I sufficiently thank my sweet biographer for the pathetic relation her elegant pen has transcribed for me? What charming reflections and delightful language you have employed throughout the whole! What greater honour could Alfred wish for, than that Elwina should write his history!

50 THE SCHOOL

O Elwina, how much are you my superior in every thing ! But so far am I from envying your excellencies, that I feel the utmost exultation, as if the praise due to you, reflected honour on your humble, faithful friend.

The history of your amiable sister, and of the Dennisons too plainly prove the destructive "Calamities of Civil War." Of the former I should say a great deal, and have felt a great deal, even had she not an infinite claim to my interest in being the sister of Elwina. I admire her fortitude ; but I must adore her very elegant panegyrist and historian. I have read it over and over with an increase of delight and satisfaction, though yet painful reflections. Did not the tears steal down the cheek of Elwina while she

traced the melancholy events? I know it could not be otherwise; it could not be written without such proofs of amiable sympathy; nor could it be read unmoved. Happy Pleydel! Yes, amidst all thy misfortunes let me style thee so. Oh, how wert thou beloved! I wish I could behold this Matilda. Should I be able to trace out the family features of the charming Elwina? I fancy each moment she must be like you. I even pictured to myself, so absorbed was I in the story, that you were indeed the person whose misfortunes you related. Elwina, it was dangerous to my peace. I threw down the paper with an agony I cannot describe; I traversed the room almost in a phrenzy. It was some time before I could collect my scattered senses; my weakness made me ashamed; I blushed although alone, and determined

to read on in a mere matter of fact manner, striving even to forget whose charming hand had penned the history.

How liberal your elogium on masonry !
How much do I admire you for it ! Were I not intended for a clerical life, I should certainly become a brother of the order, as you recommend it so strongly : I have not the least idea of its mysteries, though I see, and acknowledge its uses, as you justly observe, particularly to all men that travel,

Is it not temerity in me to say, I am convinced I should preserve its secrets inviolably ? I could have no temptation to tell them, as I am certain Elwina would never press to have them discovered, and no one but herself could influence me.

There

There have been women admitted, I believe, one for certain, the renowned queen of Sheba. Solomon, who was the wisest of all men, had not such narrow prejudices as his descendants. And I think I have heard our virgin queen Elizabeth was of the number. It is an illiberal idea, that a woman cannot keep a secret. I doubt the fault lies in the men making improper confidants. A woman of virtue and sense, we every day experience, is capable of exerting the noblest faculties, and displaying strength of mind, courage, fortitude, (and though a more passive, not less a virtue) patience and constancy. How noble and elevated above almost any man, was that lady, whom we read of in history, whose husband, through her means, had eluded the vigilance of Cromwell. When she was

D 3

apprehended,

54 THE SCHOOL

apprehended, she was threatened with death, unless she discovered where she had hidden him; but with safe conduct to her home if she would reveal the place. "In my heart," she cried, "he lies concealed: there search for him; my tongue shall never betray him."

Persons are, however, too ready in disclosing secrets, to prove that some one has been mistaken enough in their character to believe them capable of confidence. But what description are such persons of? As Shakespear says,

Let no such man be trusted.

Secrets are frequently told in the first ardours of kindness or of love; and I have heard a very sensible, and I believe experienced

experienced man say, for he was a married one, that there are some soft moments, when it is impossible to refuse any thing to a woman. It would be churlish to refuse a woman at any time such satisfactions which a man could grant with honour; but surely no man can say his honour will allow him in any case to disclose a secret, the divulging of which would injure his friend, or society in general. I have so high an idea of a virtuous, prudent wife, that I believe she would rather revere the steadiness that refused, than the weakness which complied with her request.

I think Samson shewed his head not equal in strength to his body in disclosing the secret of the lock of hair to his

wife Dalilah. Nor was his prudence very conspicuous in making choice of such a wife, whose principles, if she had any, must have devoted her to her native Philistia.

It is said, and with some degree of truth, that two friends have but one soul between them ; and therefore telling a secret to a friend (who has a right to know all that the other is informed of) is not extending the knowledge of it. I believe it is Montaigne to whom we are indebted for this convenient exemption from preserving inviolate the secrets which are communicated to us. It is a curious maxim certainly, that to tell a secret to a friend is no breach of fidelity, because the number of persons trusted is not multiplied,

plied, a man and his friend being virtually the same. But an idiot may see the fallacy of this reasoning, as, with this latitude, confidence may run on without end; the second person may tell the secret to a third, on the same principle as he received it from the first, *ad infinitum*.

Now will Elwina suppose this is premised in case I should ever become a member of the laudable fraternity of masons? You see I am pre-determined not to disclose the secret, even to the chosen friend of my heart; my more than second self! But before I am enrolled, I will be convinced that there is nothing that would militate against the vow of loyalty I have taken to my liege lady and sovereign of all my hopes and fears, to whom I have sworn

58 T H E S C H O O L

everlasting fealty and homage to my life's
end; and whom I shall soon, thank Heaven,
have the happiness of assuring from my own
lips, how very much I am her faithful
servant and friend,

A L F R E D.

L E T -

LETTER XVIII.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

WHERE slept my guardian angel this day, that it whispered not to Elwina, that Alfred would take the wings of the morning, aided by the tenderest, purest friendships, to antedate the happiness which the party from L—— purpose enjoying next Thursday?

I have begged a sheet of paper to tell you how extremely I am mortified. My too prophetic heart sunk when I saw the

track of coach wheels in the road turning out of your gates ; I feared then, what really had happened, that the carriage to which those wheels belonged, had conveyed Elwina from her home.

The fervants are very kind in offering me refreshments. I have no *gout* for gross aliment. I languish for the most delicate repast, an hour of your delightful conversation. They pressed me to walk in the garden. Alas ! I should wander about like the first man, who found himself unblest in Paradise. Every thing would be wanting while the beauteous Eve was absent. I wish to my soul I could find out on which chair you had last been seated. I feel as if I was on hallowed ground : but could I discover a trace of that spot on which Elwina sat

or

FOR FATHERS. 61

or stood, I should rivet myself to it. Ha! I see a netting box: by your leave I must look into it; perchance it is Elwina's.

Will you forgive me, Elwina? I have stolen a card out of it, on which is written your name; there is some silk wound on it. I have slipped it aside, to place the name of Alfred with yours; thus are they joined;—I shall put it among my relics;—I will shew them to you one day; but you shall promise me, never to form the idea of reclaiming them.—No, while I have life and sense they shall be preserved most sacredly; and when I breathe my last, I will request Elwina to see them laid in order in my coffin.

What



What a sweet situation is this! But how much more charming shall I think it on Thursday! You must shew me all your favourite haunts. And to add to my collection of drawings, I shall intreat you to take some view which we will fix on together. You shall only design it. I will not allow you to bend the finest eyes in the world on paper, when they can “blefs me, even me,” with their heavenly beams.

I can hardly give a name to my feelings, when I reflect that I am writing in a room which, two hours since, contained the loveliest of women! But I must check my rapture, lest I create suspicions in
your

your servants by my long stay ; for I could dwell here for ever. It was very kind in them to suffer me to enter at all, as I am so totally unknown to them. I however assured them I had a letter from Mrs. M—— to you, and even shewed the address, which one of them said, she knew directly : I can give her credit, for there are not many persons who write in the manner of Mrs. M——.

I arrived at L—— but last night, and hardly slept a minute from the agitation of my heart that flattered itself it would this day have the felicity of seeing you. I know not how to leave off, but I dare not ask for more paper, and I have got to the end of this. It is some comfort that I am in the place which your presence has enlivened, and will soon embellish again.

Adieu !

64. THE SCHOOL

Adieu ! most amiable, most revered of women ! Next Thursday ! Oh, Elwina, if my hand trembles and my heart flutters thus, how shall I be able to acquit myself with any degree of confidence, when I behold you ? Your loved presence must inspire, must strengthen me. From you I expect everything ;—without you I am nothing !

A. L. F. R. E. D.,

L E T-

LETTER XIX.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

HOW do I hate myself for not having some kind of *presentiment* of the happiness that was in store for me this morning, had I not foolishly have cast it away. Cruel fate ! thou hast robbed me of two hours of felicity which ought to have been in my life ; and perhaps while that life lasts, I shall have occasion ever to regret !

It

66 THE SCHOOL

It is so provoking ! I had no business to make this visit. Yes, I must exclaim against fate ; for I dare say I was struck with the whim of accompanying my mother, even while your generous heart was anticipating the agreeable surprise you kindly meant for Elwina. Foolish Elwina, what hast thou lost ! two hours at least of happiness ; and such happiness as thou hast so true a taste for enjoying !

For Heaven's sake come early on Thursday, that we may repair the injury done to friendship, as much as possible. Do worry Mrs. M—— to get out soon ; I know too well how dilatory she is apt to be on such occasions ; and yet she will be hurrying away in the evening for fear of robbers, though we have no such
kind

kind of beings on our road. Yet why should I captiously complain of her? I ought to intreat her forgiveness, and acknowledge my obligation to her. Will she not bring the amiable Mrs. Harley and Alfred with her? I shall write to her to-morrow, and I commission you to deliver the compliments of the family to your dear mother. I have made honourable report of you; they all are desirous of your acquaintance.

I am more fortunate than you; though you was only a temporary inhabitant, I know the chair on which you were seated. It remained close by the little table where I am now writing; you may suppose I pushed it aside to reach another; I would not sit in it for the world, *to be sure*.

Oh!

68 THE SCHOOL

Oh! I shall really quarrel with you. Only think of committing a robbery the first time you came into the house! Now I dare say, you are thinking of the little card of silk. Indeed that was a species of burglary, but I doubt you will get off, because it happened in the broad day. I must digress a moment from the subject I was upon, to observe a little on the absurdity of our laws, as if a crime committed at noon-day were not as wicked as at twelve o'clock at night. How different is the idea in Milton's estimation: on another occasion he says,

'Tis only *day-light* that makes sin.

Whereas in reality, because you steal my goods while the sun shines, an English jury, instructed by an English judge, will
affuredly

assuredly acquit you. This may be *law*, but I defy the most learned casuist to prove it *justice*. Now to proceed; you have actually purloined the hearts of both the female servants who happened to see you; had the rest fallen within the vortex of your eye-beams, they would have surrendered, *without* discretion, to the all-powerful enemy: even the thrice-encompassed heart of old Martha felt a pull that almost dislodged it from its ancient domain. She declared, “she never saw so handsome a gentleman, and so polite and well-spoken.” Oh! she warranted how much all his own servants loved him: well, to be sure, she never saw such a pair of eyes in any one’s head; she doubted not they had made many a heart ach: and yet he looked so gentle and so sweetly, as if he would be sorry to do mischief too. She

shall never forget, what a sweet voice and pretty look he had, when he desired her to be certain of giving her young lady the letter. And a great deal more that I cannot tell you now. But you are such a favourite ! I readily agreed with them, that “ it was a thousand and a thousand pities I was not at home.”

I cannot send this till to-morrow ; and if it goes by the post, you will not get it till the next day. But there are more ways than one ; I shall give it to the errand-man, and he shall carry it to the stage, which sets off for L—— at one o’clock, and thereby you will have it so much the sooner. “ I do bear a brain.”

I am

I am happy you are pleased with my performance in the historical way. I had some merit, to be sure, in compiling the materials; it was a long task. I knew not what I had undertaken, till I had got too far in the story to recede. You do me great honour by your encomiums, and really I feel myself so flattered and delighted by your praises, that I fear I shall grow so vain that I shall be good for nothing; and what then will become of me? You will be like some of the idol-makers of old. You will despise the work of your own hands.

Adieu!—Yours most sincerely,

ELWINA.

LET-

LETTER XX.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

JUST after I had dispatched my last by our little Mercury, I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from Maria. I have spoken of her to you; and I shall soon have the pleasure of introducing my amiable friends to each other. She informs me she is on her return to England, and that her excellent father is much benefited by the use of the *Barege* waters. They mean to take a house in our neighbourhood;

bourhood; and I am on the wing to look at a dwelling, which I think will suit them admirably. I feel all alive; I love Maria to my soul; and I have not seen her above these eighteen months. Her acquaintance will give you much pleasure: why do I say her acquaintance only? you will possess her friendship. What a charming little knot of amity shall we three make! I feel the joy by anticipation. Your name is not wholly unknown to her; I have made honourable mention of you in my letters, which will not fail to procure an interest in her gentle bosom for my amiable Alfred. One hour's conversation with you will do all the rest. She could not be my friend, if she did not entertain a regard for you. Adieu! I cannot stay to write any more, as I must go to look over the future mansion of my

Maria : I really would not quit my pen on any other consideration : yes, I must detain it a moment longer. Pray did you examine the contents of the netting-box ; and did you take notice of a purse ? It was nearly finished ; and on Thursday I shall present it to Alfred, as a small token of friendship from

ELWINA.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

IN a short time after you receive this, Alfred will present himself before the most amiable of women. But Elwina, dare I own to you, I feel a jealousy in my heart respecting the extreme warmth of your affection for Maria? who is this boasted Maria?—what charms does she possess?—She is the friend of Elwina, and, as such, I owe her great regard; but I am the friend of Elwina too,—I want not, —I aspire not to the possession of any other's

friendship,—give me but Elwina's, I ask no other. You possess mine entire—I—alas ! I find I have but half yours. Why does Maria return to rob me of the dear privilege, I flattered myself I had gained, of being the first on the list of Elwina's friends ?—Sweet flatterer ! Did you mean to deceive me ?—Did you not say I had gained that envied pre-eminence ? Ah, Elwina ! but then your Maria was far distant : I just supplied the place of an absent friend, and now must give way to her more exalted worth. Forgive me, Elwina, I know not what I say, or hardly what I would express ; only this I know, and I *will* take courage to say, that I wish not for life one moment longer than I am dear to Elwina.

A L F R E D.

L E T T E R XXII.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

THOUGH the winged hours have almost taken their flight, and the breezes of heaven are wafting Alfred to his friend Elwina, yet I will take up my pen, and just give you a few lines, lest I should not have an opportunity of talking to you on the subject.

Why is the heart of Alfred alarmed? Can you be jealous of my affection for one of my own sex and age? Did I not

feel the tenderest friendship for you ; a friendship that pities a weakness so sweetly amiable, I should actually chide you. Hear me, Alfred, while I swear your name is still on the top of the list. Nay, I will, to soothe your anxious care ; I will say more, your name has obliterated all the rest, Maria's alone excepted. But my friendship, my regard for her is different and distinct from that I bear to you. As well might I complain, that your dutious love for your dear mother robbed me of that friendship you vowed to me. Alfred, disquiet not yourself. If your happiness depends on my preserving the same sentiments for you, I have ever felt ; oh, rest assured you will be happy ; you will never have cause to complain of

ELWINA.

LETTER XXIII.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

WHY did I not open your dear little note, at the moment you gave it into my hand, or why did Elwina prevent me? Doubtless she thought I would run mad with delight, and commit some rash act in my phrenzy. Oh! I will wear it next my heart, that no mistaken jealousy may ever reach it. It will act as a *talisman* when I am absent from you. Never shall I cease to repeat my obligations to the fairest of women!

80 THE SCHOOL

How do I rejoice in being introduced to your family ! with what satisfaction do I trace the many attentions shewn me ! and how gladly shall I avail myself of the privilege of often calling upon them !

You drew the character of your brother with a faithful pencil ; your likeness is from the life. He is a very pleasing young man ; but the pride of distinction is very plainly perceptible : however, I have great reason to be pleased and flattered by the civilities he paid me ; and having heard his character, was almost surpris'd at the marked attention I received.

I am

I am disposed to be angry with Mrs. M——; would you believe it? she says Isabella is handsomer than you; and that in general she is thought so. I asked her if she herself thought so, and in what particular she could point out the superiority? I was glad to see I had posed her in a moment. My dear mother, finding her silent, observed, that perhaps Isabella might be called a finer woman. "Aye," said Mrs. M——, pleased to have some ground to stand on, "she is a great deal taller." "Oh then, Mrs. D——, who is six feet without her shoes, is a much handsomer woman than either Elwina or Isabella."

“ But Mrs. D—— is a fright ; and so
 “ masculine, ~~that~~ she looks like a grena-
 “ dier.”

“ Which is the next article in favour
 “ of Isabella ?” I asked.

“ Why I cannot tell,” replied Mrs.
 M——; “ only I know I have always heard
 “ her called the handsomest.” I answered
 in a line from Hammond.

I hate the beauties common minds admire.

“ So do I,” said my mother ; “ there may
 “ be people who give the preference to Ifa-
 “ bella ; and if I was to see both their por-
 “ traits drawn by a painter who could only
 “ give their features without exhibiting the
 “ character of countenance, perhaps I might
 “ be

“ be of their opinion. Isabella has, it must
 “ be owned, a fine face, good shape, and all
 “ the exterior of beauty : but the soul of
 “ Elwina resides in her expressive eyes. Her
 “ eyes ! no, it pervades each feature, each
 “ limb : she is all over soul and expression.
 “ But there is a criterion by which we may
 “ judge of the universal opinion. Which of
 “ the ladies have had the most admirers ?”

“ I know not enough of the ladies to be
 “ competent to answer for the number of
 “ her admirers ; I know Elwina has re-
 “ fused two offers ; and I have heard her
 “ very much admired : I own, if I was a
 “ man, I should prefer Elwina for a wife,
 “ for many reasons.”

It was happy for me that it was almost
 dark during this conversation. What a

glow I felt on my face while it lasted! You will believe I could have kissed my dear mother for speaking, I may say, my own opinion of the sweetest woman in the world. Yes, let the generality of mankind continue to think Isabella the finer woman. With the praise of the common herd, Elwina, I am certain, will not feel herself flattered : and yet they will utter encomiums as if they could feel your perfections as I do ; they cannot but see, and what they see they will admire.

Upon my honour you will be quite the ruin of me. This evening I put Mrs. M—— in such a pet, that I had some difficulty in making the matter up. The beautiful and elegant purse you worked for

for me, was the occasion of it. I had taken it out the first time in *public*, to score a game at whist;—Mrs. M—— my partner : the purse, of course, was admired, and Mrs. M—— mentioned the fair donor. “Apropos,” cried N——, who was standing by, “she is a charming girl; pray how does she do? Faith I was wrong not to come oftener while she was with you. I wish she was here now, I would get her to sing and play to me.” I turned my head round, and actually measured this insolent puppy with my eyes. I could hardly command myself into silence; my senses were quite deranged. “Good God, Sir!” cried Mrs. M——, “what are you about? You have trumped my best card.” I could only stammer out an apology. “Oh, that is mere bagatelle,” said one of our adversaries, “he renounced three tricks since.”

The

86 THE SCHOOL

The matter was fully proved; we lost the game by it; and Mrs. M— losing her temper, played most execrably: and you know she is not the best of all possible whist-players; so in consequence we lost the rubber. “There,” cried she, throwing down her money; “it is all your fault. I declare I wish Elwina had been further, before she gave you that nonsensical purse. This is the first time you have played since you had it. It will always be unlucky, I dare say.” I coolly replied, I hoped not for her sake, as we were still ordained to be partners; but that we could not always command fortune; and were too apt to attend to the conversation round the table. This, by the bye, is one of Mrs. M——’s great faults at whist, particularly when any of the children are in the room. Fortune,
how-

however, again declared us her favourites. My dear purse remained in my pocket, that no sacrilegious hand or eye should contaminate it; and Mrs. M—— resumed her good humour. I cannot, however, sit patiently to hear such men as N—— talk of Elwina; they should not dare to breathe her name. Oh! how arbitrary should I be if I was an emperor!

Have you heard since from *our* friend Maria? You see I make my claim sometimes; I will take a ride over in a few days, and you shall shew me the house you intend to fix her in. This dreaded Maria, I now long to see; you will take the first opportunity of presenting me to her. If her mind is congenial with yours, what a feast it must be to spend a day in such society! Adieu!

A L F R E D.

88 THE SCHOOL

LETTER XXIV.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

I SHALL soon have the honour of presenting to Elwina a little cabinet, made out of the yew tree, you used to style *forlorn Baucis*. My mother's landlord, on my saying it was a reproach to humanity to suffer it to remain in such a state, very obligingly cut it down and offered me part of the wood, which I gladly accepted of, as I have heard you admire it. I have ordered it to be made up in the form I mentioned. And what use will
Elwina

FOR FATHERS. 89

Elwina put it to? I shall have one of the same sort; they will be twins for exactness; I have already devoted it to the purpose of containing your letters.

The casket where, to outward shew,
The workman's art is seen,
Is doubly valued when we know
It holds a gem within.

My casket will indeed contain gems of the richest price; far above rubies. Like the French minister, I shall never be without my *cassette verte*; but there will be no danger of my ever leaving it behind me. No, it will be dear as life to

ALFRED.

LET-

LETTER XXV.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

I THANK you most cordially for the promise of a part of *forlorn Baucis*. Is she not to be envied for her transformation? As elevated in my opinion as the fabled Baucis of old. I was planning, some little time since, some contrivance to preserve your letters; and was going to embroider a *porte feuille* for the purpose. The dear little cabinet will be a great improvement. It will indeed be valuable
to

to me, as both the letters and the box will be proofs of your friendship.

I trust you will soon take this promised ride. All my family look for the pleasure of seeing you often. My cheeks glowed a little too when I heard you commended. I know not how it is, but I feel so fluttered when I hear your praise, that I can scarcely withhold my gratitude from shewing itself, perhaps too conspicuously.

I could not but laugh at the zeal you discovered, on Mrs. M——'s opinion, and what the world in general thought of me and Isabella. I bow to her superior charms. Mrs. M—— is right. She is more admired than I am. She may have more lovers, but she has not such friends as I have. I think it very singular, that

Isa-

Isabella never had an intimate of either sex. She is certainly a beautiful girl; but she would not be my passion, because she wants that irresistible charm, sensibility. Nothing moves or interests her. Therefore, if your mother was to see the pictures of each of us, she would undoubtedly give the palm of beauty to Isabella. But if the living Elwina is beloved by a few, whose discriminating judgments do her honour, she is satisfied. I wish not for admiration; I should hate to be that kind of woman of whom every body would say, "she is very handsome." It is an ambition I should never aspire to. I would not give a pin to have a set of features, that you might take to pieces, and admire separately; which, by the bye, you might do by Isabella, notwithstanding your heresy. But as you say,
and

and it has been said before yqu too, *it is not a set of features I admire*; I love expression, which is the soul of beauty. Whether I possess it in the degree your good mother says I do, I know not; but this I know, I allow no one handsome without it, and almost every body more than handsome who really does possess it. But I must now endeavour to express how much, and sincerely I am yours.

P. S. I forgot to mention *our* friend Maria. I am pleased with your adopting her; and I shall never presume in future to call her exclusively mine. But I will not allow her to say *our* Alfred. So do not expect it.

The house I have fixed on for her, will suit them in point of size and situation;

tion; but I wish it was nearer to us; being almost a mile off from our domain. However, that circumstance will operate sometimes in my favour, as I shall take up my abode with her now and then for a day or two, and I shall hope she will do the same by me. Her conversation is too great a treat not to make one wish for the continuance of it.

Adieu.

ELWINA.

LET-

L E T T E R XXVI,

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

I WILL answer to the question you put to me, just as I was going to take horse, after spending one of the happiest days of my life. I do indeed admire Maria, *our Maria*. She is just the kind of being I should have supposed her to be; and I should have been able to have picked her out from a thousand, for the approved friend of the elegantly-discriminating Elwina. She is gentle, affectionate, and unreproving; that is, she looks

as

as if she would pity and absolve the weakness, which perhaps she never felt. I could tell her every secret of my heart, and should expect comfort and consolation from the sympathetic softness that appears in her agreeable, though not handsome face. All this I could do if I had not the superior happiness of being acquainted with one to whom all other women must bow the knee. You, Elwina, are as much above Maria, as she is above the common routine of females. Nay, I know not whether her excellence is not rendered more conspicuous by being placed near yours. The moon, our favourite planet, shines but by reflection from the resplendent sun.

How delightfully did the minutes roll away last Monday ! Oh ! if each day was

thus to be passed, I should look for no other heaven ! I doubt that last expression is not sufficiently orthodox for one who soon will become a Christian divine : but *out of the abundance of the heart, &c.* And I really could not help that “effusion” “of friendship and fancy” breaking out, when I recalled to my imagination the hours replete with happiness that I spent *à trio* with you and our Maria. I was particularly fortunate, as I was a volunteer, to find the two amiables by themselves. But why do I say *recall* ? Each moment is ever in my memory ; I live over the whole day, which had more of felicity in it, than many years could furnish to some people.

I was with you by eight in the morning. Good God ! twelve hours I spent with Elwina !

I could almost exclaim with the rapturous Torismond—

I have lived enough !—

I do not mean to pursue the speech any further, only to say, if I had died directly, and my memory retained the circumstances of that day alone, I should, so deceived, “ think all my life had been. “ blest !”

And, indeed, what could a reasonable man wish for, more than I enjoyed on that day ? The society and friendship of two charming women.—I had sense, elegance, beauty, and harmony to lift me above the race of earthly beings.—Do you think the Grand Signior ever passed such a day in his life ? No ; the greatest voluptuary that ever existed never experienced such ineffable pleasure (which reflection even
height-

heightens) as did on that day the highly-favoured Alfred ! Oh, may this “ charming little knot of amity ” never be broken or divided !

I did not get home till past the hour that my dear mother usually goes to her chamber ; for, you know, it was impossible to gallop away from Elwina, although I did not spare my horse in going to her—It was after eleven when I reached home ; and I could find by the manner of that best of parents receiving me, that her fond heart had endured some pangs, lest any accident had happened to me. This was some allay to my past happiness. I could almost wish she did not love me quite so well, or that she had some one to divide her affection with. Oh, if the charming Elwina lived under the

same roof, we should between us share her love, and she would not as now give up her soul to a thousand anxieties, while, in looking on me, she sees all that remains of mother, brother, and husband. She kindly sat up an hour longer, to allow me the opportunity of talking of you, and our amiable friend : without such a relief I know not what I should have done, for my spirits were too much alive to have gone quietly to bed ; and, notwithstanding the early hour I rose at in the morning, I could not compose myself to sleep. I courted its gentle influence for some time ; but it was in vain. Elwina and Maria had between them “ murdered “ sleep ;” so I gave up the contest, and rising, struck a light, and sat down to the only employment worthy of concluding such a day, reading over your charming letters.

letters. Believe me, every time I peruse them I discover fresh beauties; they are superior to any thing I ever read in any language, and I should pronounce them most finished performances, were I to meet with them in the hands of any one. What then must be my opinion of the dear lines, when the writer is so well known, so admired as is Elwina; and when I can whisper to my grateful heart, that it is to Alfred they are addressed! What a happiness for me that we were born in the same age! I should have been like the Persian prince, had I found such elegant letters in my father's treasury, and certainly have set out on my travels to discover the lovely writer. I am sure you remember the story.

Adieu—I am going to inspect my workman, who, by the bye, is but a bungler ; however, as I know a little of turning myself, I shall hope the cabinet will have some little merit independent of the donor.

Yours most faithfully,

ALFRED.

LET-

LETTER XXVII.

ELWINA TO ALFRED,

I AM by no means the perfect creature your too partial fancy thinks me. But I will tell you all my faults ; and as I feel contrition for them, I hope it will prove a step towards amendment.

I was, really I could not help it, I was hurt at the former part of your last letter. I thought you expressed yourself more warmly in your elaborate praise of Maria, than I should have done by any friend you

had introduced me to. I felt piqued—I feared I had lost some interest with you; however I took myself to task before I went on with the letter, and laid it down, determining not to finish the perusal of it, while so selfish a sentiment predominated in my unjust bosom. It was that expression of yours which I was particularly pained by, *I could tell her every secret of my heart, and I should expect comfort and consolation from her sympathetic softness.* “Ah, poor “Elwina!” I could not help exclaiming, “thou art not worthy of such confidence.” That very sentiment proved I was not; but, as I said, I took myself to task, and when I had expiated my offence, I again perused the letter, and, perhaps, was as reprehensible for being enraptured with the latter part of your elegant epistle, as I was for the chagrin the former had occasioned.

I ex-

I experienced the truth of your assertion, that *Maria would pity and absolve the weakness which she never felt* ; for I owned all my folly to her, and indeed gave her your letter to read. Do you allow of such things ? And shall I use the sophistical reasoning of Montaigne, to prove to you, that your letter being seen by her, is just the same as if I alone had perused it ? She is, indeed, my second self ; her faith is tried and known ; and I dare believe you would not wish I should secrete from her confidence, the perfect esteem and friendship I feel for you : To her alone I talk of you—indeed, in a general way I speak of you in the family—and, *apropos*, I had like to have forgotten the message : My mother hopes you will not fail to come hither next Tuesday ; we are to have a little musical party, and she has set you down for a

performer, so you must, *nolens volens*, send your baggage, as it will be too late to return to L—— afterwards; and then your excellent mother will be free from the anxious fears that invaded her gentle bosom last Monday evening.

Do me the favour to practise that charming *duo* in *Orfeo*—I mean to have the pleasure of singing it with you—You will be with us by dinner of course—And do not forget your *cremona*—send it, well packed up, by the errand man, with your *odds and ends*. When you will get the violin back again, I will not pretend to say—It would be no bad plan to lay an embargo upon it; as it might be an inducement to your oftener coming to us; I think I shall adopt it.

Our

Our Maria is still with us, and I shall keep her till after the concert, and as long after that (to express myself elegantly) as ever I can.

I have been laying your sweet letters in order, that I may lose as little time as possible in placing them in the sacred repository when it arrives. You may say what you will of mine, and I hope you will not abridge me of the same privilege; but if the merit of writing is to be estimated by the pleasure they afford in the perusal, it will be a sharp contest between us which is the best. Maria shall be umpire one of these days—We will lay our several claims before her, and she shall decide upon them.

Adieu.

ELWINA.

LETTER XXVIII.

ELWINA TO MARIA.

I REGRETTED your absence less than I should have done, had yesterday been a day at all to your taste ; you well know it was not so to mine. I hate these magnificent doings—It might be truly styled a cabinet dinner, and was calculated to delight my brother—Indeed my father was delighted too ; but it was easy to see that he almost groaned under his dignities ; and now and then feeling what he calls his inferiority, he looked as disconcerted as

he does when my mother orders almonds and raisins, with French plums, in the desert, which, he says, are "the relicks of the old leaven of trade."

You know how I hate these politicians, and great men—I think the assortment a vile one; and happy was I when we females were allowed to withdraw, and leave them to their conferences.

You may be certain, my dear Maria, there is some point to be gained, or these lords, and members of the ministry, would never take the pains to visit such little folks as we are. But why trouble you with these matters, when I have a subject of so much more moment to enlarge upon?—But it is a subject I hardly know how to discuss. You ask me if Alfred is my lover?

It

110 THE SCHOOL

It is a very simple question, and could, one should think, be easily answered ; and yet, the more I reflect upon it, the less able am I to give you satisfaction on that head.

We must first inquire, what does the declaration of love consist in ? Is it words or actions that denote the passion ? And is there no other method of a man convincing you he loves you but those few words, which I have heard from so many men, who, I dare say, know no more of the *Sweet Passion of Love*, than a broom-stick ; “ You are a sweet girl, and I love you.” If so—then I declare, upon my honour, Alfred never used that expression to me ; and it is so common-place a way of making love, that, I as freely declare, I should be very sorry he ever should. But that I am the being most dear to him on earth,

it

it would be heresy and treason to deny my belief of. I am thoroughly persuaded I am—but I must own too, marriage has never been his subject. Perhaps, for from my Maria I will conceal no secret working of my heart; perhaps I have sometimes wished him to be more explicit on that theme; and more so since I see he is so well received by all my family—I say *all*; as even my eldest brother treats him with a civility he does not uniformly practise to untitled men. In the course of the narration I made him of Matilda, I mentioned, though without design, the fortune my father gave her, and what we were to expect. From the respect, even to veneration, he had been accustomed to shew me, I sometimes fancied (as he knew the style we lived in, and from some other circumstances) he thought we rather looked for high alliances;

alliances ; but his conduct is exactly the same as it ever was. You owned you were struck with it, and made this remark in addition ; that the same attention from any other man would either give him the constrained air of ceremony or over-officiousness ; but that it was all grace in him, and peculiarly his own.

Again, I have thought that it would not suit him to marry a woman without a larger fortune than he now expects with me ; but then I must do him the justice to believe, as a man of honour, he would not have striven to gain my affections ; and that he is sole master of them, I doubt, can be no more a secret to him than it is to you. And another thing, he is not an ambitious man ; he talks of the dear delights of domestic ease, where one lives
the

the life of reason, not that of sacrificing all one's comforts to the whims and caprices of the world. His *maternal* fortune, as I may call it, is three thousand pounds ; his living five hundred per ann. and his mother's present income two hundred a year. She is still in the prime of life, being but just forty two, and, therefore, may live a long while—she is one of the sweetest tempers in the world, and I am a very great favourite with her, which I should think rather an argument in favour of his fixing on me for a wife, as I am sure he would be happy in not separating from her, and some women would not choose to have a mother-in-law part of her family. With my poor three thousand pounds I cannot expect any very great match ; and from the reception he has met with from my father and mother, I am convinced they would

would not think it an unsuitable one. Surely, we might live the life of reason and happiness, if not of grandeur, as between us there would be some provision for a family.—These things (as they will sometimes occur to me) throw a mystery over his conduct that I cannot develope; but I am fearful of urging an explication of the enigma—both because he is upon many occasions extremely unreserved (and there may be family reasons which keep him for the present silent), and because I dread losing his acquaintance. While I consider him as a friend alone, I may freely enjoy his society; but should he be urged to declare his future intentions, I may lose him for ever as a friend; and his loss, I own to my dear Maria, is an evil I cannot anticipate the danger of without the utmost horror. I do not wish to marry,
and,

and, therefore, why seek to interrupt an intercourse productive of the highest delight to me?

I never knew him so lively as he was on that Monday that we passed together; there was an *enjouement* about him that day, which rendered him wonderfully pleasing; and yet what a chaste delicacy, if I may use the expression, amidst all his *gaieté de cœur*—The former he has always preserved through the whole of our acquaintance; never making the least advances towards familiarity—ever tender and respectful. I remember (can I ever forget it?) the circumstance which first led me to suppose he loved me. Mrs. M——'s look discovered one morning that the house was in danger

danger of having been burnt down by carelessness, in some work that had been done to a chimney, and which had not been properly secured. At the time we knew of it the danger was over ; but had the flames got vent in the night, from the situation of Mrs. M——'s chamber and mine, we must have been burnt in our beds. Alfred had heard something of the story, and flew to the house to be better informed. Mrs. M—— had some family engagement, and requested me to give him an account of the imminent danger we had escaped. In the course of my relation, I said it was a great chance he saw me again, for had the fire broke out a few hours sooner we must have perished. While I pronounced the word, he snatched my hand with both his, and carrying it quickly to his lips, impressed a fervent kiss upon it.

His

His face, which was pale before, from the shock of my story, was in that instant crimsoned over. I believe I looked foolish enough, but took no notice of the freedom of the action, and went on with my account as well as I could.—From that moment, till the end of my life, I have devoted that hand to Alfred.

From the frequency of his visits to Mrs. M——'s, which she really encouraged by some means or other, so that scarce a day passed without my seeing him; we insensibly attached ourselves to each other; a conformity of opinion, a parity of years, and many other little nameless circumstances and incidents, contributed to our marking out each other as congenial minds. You know, since the affair of Mr. D——, I had determined against suffering my heart
to

to be attached; and I am clearly of opinion, had Alfred, in the early part of our acquaintance, professed a passion for me, I should have rejected it. He took a more effectual method; he stole into my affections by the mere amiableness of his character; and the only method he used in the art of making love, was, by his actions to prove how worthy he was of being beloved. He challenged my esteem, and interested my judgment before he alarmed my sensibility. After the little incident I mentioned, I must have been blind not to see his preference, and I must have been more than insensible not to be impressed by it. I may say to you that it is no great triumph to be admired in the presence of Mrs. M——. However, let who would be of the party he had neither eye or ears, or hardly a tongue

for any one else. His first letter, which I shewed you, gave me a sensation of delight (though it contained very little information that was new to me), which no one I ever received before had excited; but notwithstanding that and every succeeding one has been tender and affectionate, he has never stepped beyond the limitation I gave him of friendship. If he ever means to be nearer—(I think no connection can make him dearer to me) it remains a secret in his own bosom; let him use his own discretion; I shall never seek an explanation which may, as I said before, destroy that happiness I now enjoy, and which more than contents me. Whether I have contented you, my dear Maria, I know not; but you have my whole heart before you....Never shall it conceal a sentiment from so true, so valuable a friend.

You

You possess, and have a right to my most unbounded confidence; and to you I can write and talk of all that interests a heart, which you, my beloved Maria, and my amiable Alfred share between you. Adieu.

Yours ever,

ELWINA.

LET-

LETTER XXIX.

MARIA TO ELWINA.

WHATEVER may be the cause which prevents a more explicit conduct in Alfred, I shall ever regret, my beloved Elwina, that it does exist. You seem so thoroughly formed for each other's happiness, that I cannot but wish from my soul your union was perfected. Never did I see veneration heightened by so glowing an affection, as appears in his eyes when he beholds you. Oh, such ardent gazes must be proofs that he loves to as great a degree,

as that passion can be carried ; and my dearest Elwina lags not far behind. Heaven grant I may soon congratulate you both on being more intimately acquainted with each other's sentiments. But, my Elwina, you have lost much of your charming vivacity. On that Monday, indeed, you were all alive, for then Alfred was with you. You say you are contented—more than contented. Why then are you less cheerful than you used to be ? For your peace of mind, I hope he will soon explain himself, or I shall wish—forgive me, Elwina, my love for you prompts the wish—that you had never seen him.

For my own part, I have no idea of these friendships between the sexes. It is not in nature that they should be able to keep within its narrow bounds, though it seems

seems so easy to prescribe them. Should it proceed for years, as it has continued for some months, it would devote you both to a life of celibacy; for how cold must his vows be to any other woman! and how could you ever give your hand to another man? I am not an advocate for declarations of passion being made, till there has been some opportunity given of becoming a little acquainted with the dispositions of each other. Many unhappy marriages are, I am convinced, the consequence of persons being ignorant of the tempers of those whom they have too suddenly addressed. But here has been a sufficient length of time; Alfred is too amiable to trifle with your happiness, and yet he must be blind to his own attractions, and your sensibility, if he sees not that he is the sole object of

your tenderness. Alas ! alas ! every thing shews it but too plainly.

I grieve the more, my sweet Elwina, because I see in Alfred the amiable counterpart of your dear self.

Mr. D—— was unworthy of you, and I am certain he never would have been the object of your *free* choice. That you even had a good opinion of him was the consequence of his deep dissimulation, which effectually concealed for a long time the natural bent of his disposition. You acted nobly throughout the whole business ; but on examination, my dear, you will find your pride, more than your sensibility, was wounded by the detection of his profligacy.—I am happy it was so ; you could not have acquired so soon the indifference
you

you have felt for him this long time. The match was looked on in a suitable light by your family—I mean suitable to their wishes in point of circumstances. His fortune was much superior to yours, and I know too your delicate mind was gratified, by having the sanction of all your friends in the disposal of your hand. All this operated to inspire a kind of liking for Mr. D——, which his conduct, as it appeared to the face of the world, certainly justified. But even while in prospect he had the idea of being the husband of Elwina, to give way to a licentious passion for so low a creature as the bar-maid of a coffee-house; it debased him beneath every thing, but the contempt with which my charming friend treated him, when he could not clear himself from the charge you brought against him. But tell me, Elwina,

is not the affection you feel for Alfred different from that you experienced for Mr. D——? Could you break this *friendly connection* with that firmness of philosophy you did one that was so near becoming a matrimonial one? Yet why should I seek to probe a heart which you have laid open to my view? It is unfriendly—it is ungenerous.

The time will soon arrive when Alfred will be in possession of his living; if, then, he does not make an offer of his hand, Elwina, he is not worthy of you. Then will my beloved friend promise me to exert all the strength of her excellent understanding (which I never yet saw equalled), to combat an attachment that must otherwise be destructive of her felicity? Heaven send you may never have the sad fortune

to endeavour to drive a too beloved image from your bosom. But his conduct must very soon be the criterion of his merit. I love you too well, my Elwina, to be at ease while your amiable heart is a prey to any suspense.

Ever yours,

M A R I A.

LETTER XXX.

ELWINA TO MARIA.

“**W**HOM the Lord loveth he chasteneth:” and out of love to Elwina does her beloved Maria plant a crown of roses on her head, which, while they adorn, certainly wound her temples with the thorns. You have forced me to examine my heart. You have constrained me too to make strictures on Alfred’s conduct. I feel pain from it ; if I have deceived myself, my error made me happy, and I
am

am weak enough to wish it could have continued to my life's end.

I thought, Mária, you knew enough of mankind not to be ignorant, that it is the worst way in the world to raise people's spirits by telling them they have lost their vivacity. I have observed a hundred times, when any person has looked grave in company, that on another's observing it, they have sunk by degrees into melancholy: whereas, if they had been left a few minutes to themselves, they might have regained their former good spirits. But when this remark is made, it is natural to attempt a vindication from the charge, by unmeaning smiles; at the same time that the imagination is flying to the heart, the natural feat of inquietude; to trace out the cause for dejection stealing on the features,

and the common result is a constrained behaviour the rest of the day.

So you have fixed the criterion of Alfred's merit—may he be able to pass the *ordeal*.

Should he prove a delinquent, I promise you, my dearest Maria, to do the best I can to establish the character of a philosopher; if you will allow me in the mean time to give way to the dear delight of thinking him worthy my most tender affections.....Thus then this bargain is settled.

You lament my being in a state of suspense. No, I rather think it is a state of expectation, which is quite a different matter, my dear; one is seated near the confines

lines of despair; the other is gilded with hope. But whatever name it may be called by, I feel too much satisfaction in it, not to tremble at a change, lest it should not be productive of an equal share of happiness.

In the letter he wrote, after spending the day with us, you recollect he says, *he never was so happy in his life.* He certainly expressed more affection for me by words, than ever he had done, and I talked with more freedom to him; but the conduct of both, I am convinced, was actuated by the same principle; namely, your being with us: our conversation would not have been so gallant, had we been *tête-à-tête*. There is a tender softness in his address when alone; but it is more in his manner than his language; and for

his letters---what shall I say of them ! They have all the spirit of love, if they are not the express thing itself. But you observe, he never styles himself any thing but *my friend.....the object of his esteem, &c.* When I write to him, I am sometimes forced to check my pen, lest I should express myself too tenderly ; and when I have sealed my letter, I have condemned myself for having written too nearly the sentiments of my heart, which lasts but till I have again perused his, and then, if I could strike my pen across the word *friendship*, and substitute love, oh, how delightful and exquisitely tender they would be !——God forgive me, but I have often thought of them, as Mr. H----- used to say of some of the methodists hymns ; “ Put but the
 “ name of Damon in the room of Jesus,
 “ and

“and they would make the prettiest love
“songs in the world.”

“Now, my beloved friend, I hope you will think my loss of vivacity purely accidental, and that I shall *badiner* with my pen as I used to do; and do not attribute it solely to the expectation that to-morrow Alfred is to dine here. I dare say your affectionate heart at this line will exclaim, “Heaven grant some incident may arise
“to induce him to declare his real intentions towards Elwina!” My dear Maria, she wishes it too; but that must all be left to chance. I could never plot a scheme in my life on any occasion, much less on this important business: Accident may do something. If he waits for an opportunity, I doubt to-morrow will not furnish him with one. For we have other company,
and,

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and, I dare say, I shall not see him, but
surrounded with a crowd, which will not
leave us till after the hour of his departure.
Most likely he will not be near me
the whole day ; and at table he will

Drink to me only with *his* eyes.

Those eyes ! Good God ! if only friendship
is expressed by them, who could sustain
their effulgence when enlightened by love ?
Oh ! it would be the story of Semele re-
vived---No mortal could stand such a fire.

Adieu, my beloved, my true friend.

I am most faithfully yours,

E L W I N A.

L E T-

LETTER XXXI.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

WHO would ever believe it possible that the day passed in Elwina's company could be called an unpleasant one by Alfred? But could I be said to be in Elwina's company? I saw her indeed; but surrounded with a crowd of beings who seemed created for no other purpose than to interpose between me and the most amiable of women. I heard her voice too; but it was to others it was directed, and had not her friendly eye sometimes turned towards the forlorn Alfred, he would have

have “fat like his grandfire cut in ala-
 “baster.” For heaven’s sake, Elwina, op-
 pose in future these oppressive civilities of
 your good mother in inviting me to parties
 so little suited to my taste. Oh, one day,
 nay, one hour spent like that happy Mon-
 day, is better than thousands such as yes-
 terday! And then that barbarous custom
 of the women retiring from the table, and
 leaving a set of dissolute or stupid men
 together. Never let me have the honour
 of filling up a place at your table, which
 some great man may aspire to, and which
 I have not *gusto* enough to enjoy. We are
 eager to copy our neighbours on the con-
 tinent. Why then do we not adopt their
 manners at table? They have no separa-
 tions immediately after dinner, or rather
 seclusions of the lovely sex. In my own
 family, I am determined to abolish so ab-
 surd

furd and detestable a custom, founded on Gothicism, and ignorance. And if I am blest with a companion of sentiments similar to my own, some little scheme may be fixed on, which, I doubt not, the majority of the company will prefer, to the mere passing the toast in a dull *routine*, or noisy intemperate mirth. I really feel chagrined ---I have lost a day, in which I had promised myself much delight; and my mortification is but in proportion to the pleasing enjoyment I had anticipated. Indeed it was too bad to have heaven in my view, with such a gulph between.

There was but one white speck of good, and that I am grateful for. I saw with what care you guarded my favourite myrtle from the hands of the officious baronet, who methought was full
of

of consequence from his new assumed title. Can you believe, Elwina, I shall ever part with the single leaf you afterwards picked from the beloved shrub, and with a look—oh! that would have overpaid a thousand ills, gave it into my happy hand? Did you observe the kiss I imprinted on it? I hope no one else did---I blamed myself afterwards for being so little master of myself, as to act as if I had been alone. Sweet pledge of Elwina's friendship and esteem; Alfred shall never lose thee! How inexpressibly dear to me is every such attention you honour me with!

When do you go to town for the winter? But why do I ask that question? No doubt that motion will be regulated by those of the polite world: Mrs. M----- says, there is no one to see in town

till after Christmas. Indeed, I, think, there is very little worth seeing at any time, so partial am I to the country; and yet I wish you was to be in town soon, as I should oftener have the happiness of seeing you, the distance being so much lessened. I however regard not the shortness of the days. What is darkness to him whose mind is illumined with the brightness of Elwina's esteem?

But those charming days, when some hour of each was embellished by spending it in your society at L — ; will they not return? Oh, Elwina, surely they might. Mrs. M—— often regrets your absence— The least hint that you should like to pass some time there, would be most gladly attended to; why may I not propose it?

Will you do me the honour of bespeak-
ing

ing a place in your mother's museum for two or three little natural productions; which an acquaintance of mine sent to me the other day. I am happy to have it in my power to make even this poor return for the civilities I have received, and which my heart acknowledges with gratitude. I shall send them next week with your cabinet, and perchance a letter also; for I shall not miss so fair an opportunity of adding one to the collection, which you have promised to place in that little repository sacred to friendship.

I have never had any conversation with you on the subject of your having shewn my letters to our Maria. It is well she is *our* Maria, or I should have a thousand objections to it. My letters, and I trust yours, are written from the heart, and
not

not for the judgment to criticise upon. They are the effusions of friendship, not the productions of genius. I own I feel a singular kind of pleasure that my eye alone has seen the elegant transcript of Elwina's mind—that her letters come immediately from her heart to speak to mine—I even feel an ecstasy in being certain that my eye follows her in the perusal, as if I was sensible that moment of her divine presence. I have no friend in the world to whom I think I have a right to shew your letters. As your goodness and condescension is infinite, in honouring me with your correspondence, I should look on it as profanation to let any eye but mine behold them. I am far from perfection, but that of a vain boaster shall never be laid to my charge. Yet, my fair friend, do not infer from hence, that I blame you for acting

acting differently from me in this particular. You have a right to act according to your principles. It would be arrogance in me to prescribe rules for your conduct; and I think circumstances render our situations so very different; that what would be reprehensible in me, is quite the contrary in you.

I admit Montaigne's sophistry in this instance. Maria and you are but as one, and an undue and unusual reserve to her, would look like a breach of friendship which you have mutually vowed to each other—Though I know her (both from observation, and character, as drawn by the elegant pen of the amiable Elwina) gentle and unreproving, yet I dread her strictures. You see the boldness of Alfred, even in his humility: I trust to

the partial friendship you have long shewn me, or should I not fear your judgment, in which you are as superior as you are in every thing else to any person I ever yet knew? Shew then every letter (and pray let this be one) to our good Maria. Your own excellent heart will be more satisfied by doing so, and I shall forget that circumstance when I am writing to you. What, indeed, can I think of, but the charming object to whom I devote my pen? but if she is satisfied, whose criticism need I fear? I know I am guilty of inaccuracies, from the rapidity with which I write.—One reason is, I hardly know any expression in any language which can give a proper idea of the high sense I have of your superlative merit, or in what degree I am yours,

A L F R E D.

LETTER XXXII.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

I AGREE with you—I hate such formal doings as we had when last I had the pleasure of seeing you, and will take care you shall not be exposed to such mortifications in future. It was really well meant of my mother, and I am sure Alfred thinks so. There were but few of the party that I liked, and some were quite strangers to me, among whom was Sir Thomas K——, whose honours, as you say, sat rather uneasily upon him. Indeed he looks as if they were not made to fit him ;

him; but he will grow to them in time, as some oeconomic mothers say when they have ordered their sons clothes too large. Hang the man! why take up my paper with him? I really owe him a spite for his almost impertinent freedom about the dear myrtle. It was owing to Isabella saying unnecessarily, that it was my favourite employment to nurse that little plant.—I hope he did not see what *I* did, the greeting you gave the leaf, haply insensible of its happiness. I admire your delicate remorse on the occasion; and so I do your argument about the difference of our shewing the letters each receives; yet I think I have rather wrung your consent from you, than obtained it as a free gift. But Maria is truly your friend, and admires your letters, though they are not beheld, perhaps, in that charming light as if they were addressed

to herself.—So that in fact you may place more dependence on her praise than mine, and be proportionably flattered by it.

My mother requests me to assure you, she shall think her collection, which you dignify with the title of a museum (but you are apt to rate persons and things too high) very much embellished by any article you think worthy a place. I am glad she has taken to be a *virtu*; it is a very innocent and pleasing employment for a woman no longer young; and she has as much pleasure and satisfaction in examining a dead moth (she would not run a pin through it though on any account), as a gay beauty has in fixing on a birth-day suit. She is not yet so mad in the science as to give up her judgment as many *virtus* do, who really deceive themselves so grossly,

grossly, that one can but wonder at, and pity their credulity, when, with their solemn faces, they assert such marvellous things as shock one's faith.

I know one of this class who shews a drinking glass of a date long before the invention of such vessels; and yet he positively affirms it to be a known fact; whereas, was he to be asked the year when the art of making glass was discovered, he would accurately tell you the precise title. My brother was going one day to refute him on his own grounds, but waved his triumph, from, indeed, a principle of good nature, that it would be cruel to rob him of so valuable a part of his collection, by destroying the antiquity of it.

You have promised to give value to your

present, by inclosing a letter in it; and who knows but some future *virtu* in the family may shew it centuries hence, as the sacred repository of letters from the elegant Alfred to the faithful Elwina.

As to the event of leaving our *villa*; as you suppose, we shall be regulated by fashion. My brother, who tells us now and then how they proceed in the great world, always lets us know those matters, that we may not run the hazard of making him ridiculous by our plebeian fancies. He mentioned some time since, he wished my father would take a house in another quarter of the town, as Bedford-square was stigmatized with the odious appellation of the *citizens perch*. You would have laughed—No, you would have been sorry, as I was, to have seen the effect it had

instantly on my poor father: "Pray, son," said he, "do look out for a house in any other part you like best. Indeed I never was very fond of this situation, but your mother thought it airy."

"Yes, answered the parliament man, and so it is, compared to Watling-street." The very sound of that dreadful place is worse than the filing of saws, or marrow-bones and cleavers to my father's ears, as it is replete with the ideas of counting-houses, ledgers and bills of parcels. "Oh! fie, fie!" he cries, "do not remind me of my misfortunes." I could not help remarking, that a stranger would suppose he had appeared in the Gazette, instead of doing honour to the commerce of our country, and supporting with credit the glory of our nation in the character

of a fair dealer. My father shook his head, and my brother, with a sneer of contempt, asked me, "If I felt an attachment to any little smug-faced grocer or haberdasher, that I was so great an advocate for trade?" I returned for answer (for I own I wished to pique him a little), "If I had an attachment to a worthy man, I should not reject him because he was in trade, if it was only out of a principle of gratitude for being indebted to it, for having a member of parliament for my brother." He turned upon his heel, and said "I was very saucy, & but good company might teach me better." Poor Clodio! how insignificant does this *little* pride make its slaves appear!

The house which Maria's father has taken is now nearly put in repair, and they will

will come into it before Christmas. We shall certainly not go to town before that festival. I could wish it, though no more a friend to that place itself than you are ; but these short days and long evenings I feel more anxiety almost, than I receive pleasure by seeing you, on account of the length of the way and darkness. I feel too on your mother's account ; I know she suffers extremely from her fears, lest any accident should happen to her treasure. Whenever you can take a ride over in a morning, I shall have infinite satisfaction in seeing you ; but without that is convenient, I will be content to view you " in my mind's eye, Horatio," till a more favourable season.

It will not be quite the thing to pay a visit to Mrs. M—— ; I could not do it

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for many reasons, and a very powerful one, which I will tell you, is the circumstance of Maria coming to settle among us.—She being *my* particular friend (abstracted from my wish to have the happiness of her society), I could not now leave H— on any account, without being guilty of an impropriety, which I know you have too much regard for me to wish I should ever incur.

We may meet, as you say in one of your letters ; and I hope Alfred will not look on this as my forbidding our *often meeting*, if fate permit it. Before I go to town I shall send home your books ; I have perused them, and by way of payment for the pleasure they have afforded me, I shall, at the same time, send you two drawings in chalk, which I have just received

ceived from the frame makers ; they are from the two views which you pointed out when Maria was sitting beside us, under the oak where we dined. One is a morning, the other an evening landscape.

That they are the production of Elwina's pencil will, I am convinced, insure them a welcome reception from Alfred ; nor will they lose their value by bringing to his memory a day, which he has declared was *one of the happiest of his life*. Elwina can only wish that every day may be marked with felicity that is added to the life of Alfred.

I am very sincerely yours,

ELWINA.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

AT last I have an opportunity of sending the long talked of box to Elwina ; and, perhaps, I should have had the happiness of presenting this “ offering “ to the shrine of friendship” in person ; but from indisposition, trifling indeed in itself, but not so in the eye of a fond mother. My amiable friend, I know, will pardon my attention to my mother’s request of not leaving the house for a few days.

days. My disorder is only a slight sore throat: but as I once in my life was attacked by a very alarming one, the least symptom of a return fills her tender bosom with a thousand fears, which, I assure you, are totally groundless.

You cannot think how I was flattered yesterday by a visit from your brother William. Finding me an invalid, he excused himself from returning to Mrs. M——'s, and good naturedly passed the day with me. As we are both designed for the same profession, it was natural to fall upon the topic of ordination. My time will soon come; *his*, from being two years younger, is yet at a distance. I laughed, and told him he should not have the trouble of seeking for a curacy (which appointment is necessary previous to the being ordained), as

By that time I should have it in my power to offer him one. Mr. T— is so good as to name me for his, and of course I shall, in his church, deliver my maiden sermon. I doubt I shall feel awkward on the occasion, and, perhaps, acquit myself as ill. Thank Heaven there will be no one who knows me in that parish; and the circumstance of my being a novitiate will be kept a secret.

And will you do me the favour of accepting a lock of hair, when *the flowing honours of my head* are somewhat abridged? I must consult with you how it shall be set, and to what purpose adapted.

I must return to William once more, and tell you how extremely I like his conversation. I have a hope that he rather entertains

tertains a regard for me; I think his behaviour proved it. He has promised to pass some time with me at the rectory. Oh, Elwina, my charming friend, I look forward to the time of forming my establishment there with hope, anxiety, and a thousand thousand trembling expectations; either I shall be happy or miserable, and that in the superlative degree. The die will soon be cast which stamps all my future days with one or other. There is no medium---I must be all or nothing.

Yours ever faithfully,

ALFRED.

LET,

L E T T E R XXXIV.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

WHEN the bosom of a mother is
 filled with a thousand fears, can
 that of a friend be perfectly at ease? Oh,
 no, Alfred, it cannot; I feel it cannot. For
 pity's sake then, let me hear by the carrier,
 who will bring this to you, as I shall then
 have so much earlier intelligence than by
 the post. Indeed sore throats always re-
 quire much attention. You have the best
 of nurses in your dear mother, and good
 advice

advice, if you have sent for Mr. L——, which I trust your mother has done, even should you have thought it unnecessary.

I thank you most intirely for the very elegant repository; but your letter threw me into too much agitation to suffer me to examine all its beauties and conveniences. It is really *multum in parvo*: I shall have great pleasure in arranging it by and bye, which will be when my anxieties give me leave, by being themselves lessened; as you once said of me, *I cannot bear these infirmities of mortality in you*. Our friendship, I trust, is immortal: why then should these machines be so vulnerable?

I am pleased William shewed so much attention to you. It is highly flattering to my heart, that my favourite brother should

should esteem my favourite friend. He was to set off from London to Cambridge, so that I have not yet heard from him, how he liked his visit; but doubt not sufficiently so to induce him to accept your invitation to the rectory. I cannot divine why the being fixed there is to decide the happiness or misery of your life. I have sometimes said you were inexplicable; but it is no part of friendship to seek into the recesses of another's bosom. I have read somewhere that, "although confidence is the basis, curiosity is the bane of friendship; and there are some secrets too sacred even for the bosom of friendship." There is more solidity in this maxim than in a hundred of Montaigne's.

Adieu—Heaven send you health and happiness in the extreme, sincerely prays.

E L W I N A.

I shall send this by our gardener, who luckily goes up to town this morning, and returns in the evening. Spare me the mortification of hearing a negative to the first question I shall ask. Need I tell you what that will be ? If you do not know, you have very little sensibility ; and if you suffer me to be disappointed, I shall think you have less friendship.

LET-

LETTER XXXV.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

I HOPE this speedy answer to my fair friend will acquit me of those charges she threatens to allege against me : charges which, I trust, whatever are my imperfections, will never be founded in justice; and then I am convinced Elwina will not allow them to have weight in her amiable and friendly bosom.

I have but just time to inform you of my amendment, and I hope in a few days

to have the very great happiness of seeing you. Mrs. M—— has proposed paying you a morning visit before you quit H——, and has had the goodness to offer me a seat in her coach. I shall keep her to the text, or I shall be inclined to make unpleasant comments on the versatility of some people's principles.

Am I inexplicable, Elwina? Would you could see every movement in my heart; a heart that knows not how to prize too highly all your excellencies; but it trembles, while—Here is the carrier—he cannot wait, Betty says.-----

Adieu! Adieu!

A L F R E D.

L E T.

LETTER XXXVI.

ELWINA TO MARIA.

My ever dear Maria,

FOR your inspection I shall send you two letters from Alfred. I wish they may amuse you, and satisfy your generous heart more than they have done mine. I wonder what he would have added, had not the abominable carrier come in a moment, that you must allow was a very critical one. I shall not make many comments upon them. If you do

not

FOR FATHERS. 165

not come down on Saturday, send them by the post, that I may lay them in order in a beautiful box which he sent me. It is really elegant, and I doubt has cost him a mint of money. There is every convenience for writing, and it is furnished with the necessary implements. On a slip of paper he writes thus :

“ Half the pens I have stolen, whose service I dedicate to my lovely friend. I have shared a quire of paper too. I hope you will find nothing wanting but a *knife*, and that is an interdicted present; unless, indeed, I had the muse of Mr. Bishop, who wrote those elegant and tender lines to his wife on that subject. If I was so happy, I might be inspired with the same powers.”

“I did

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I did not see this little prose impromptu, till after I had written to him, which, my Maria may be certain, I did on the first instant, as I was anxious to know how the poor youth's throat went on.

Do not you think, Maria, in the latter end of the letter which I have marked No. 1, that he had an opportunity of being more explicit? *But the die will soon be cast that will fix either my happiness or misery*, whatever it does by his. It will be no punishment to devote myself to a life of celibacy, for whatever are his intentions, I am firmly determined never to be the wife of any other man.

But with a new leaf let us change the gloomy subject, or I shall fill the gentle bosom of my Maria with a thousand fancies

cies

ties that really have no existence. I give not way to sad ideas; but resolve to look forward to pleasing prospects. You see what a philosopher I am; never anticipating evil, and disposed to meet the blessings of life half way at least.

I have finished reading the books I had from L——, and have returned them. I must tell you one little *trait* of your friend's weakness. One evening I was reading some of Fitzosborne's Letters, after I had gone up to my chamber, and a small pin dropped out of my handkerchief between the leaves: I was just going to take it out; "No," cried I, checking myself, "no, there thou shalt remain: and oh! how blest shall I be, if in some future time I shall again behold thee!"

Maria,

I know not how it is, but I have taken an invincible prejudice against this Baronet; I think he has in a great measure perverted the principles of my brother. It is not possible, that one man can always be in the right: but now my brother votes constantly with the minister; and obeys his summons as readily as if every thing depended on his obedience: indeed, poor man, he is obliged to strain every nerve to keep himself in his seat. Heaven knows whether it be better for our poor distracted country, that he should remain at the helm or not. But I wish for peace and quietness.

Alfred has acquired great credit with my mother, by sending her some natural curiosities. You would have been delighted to have seen her happy countenance,

party to dinner? no, I remember I wrote to you the day before I expected him. It proved, as I supposed it would, by no means pleasant to him. Yesterday we had the same set, Alfred excepted. These politicians are not so deep, but they may be fathomed even by a young female. I have discovered one of their secrets; and, though I think it rather against the state, I shall not scruple to inform you of it. You know, Maria, by a new and necessary arrangement, a contractor cannot sit in the House; so my poor father is to be the ostensible person, in a contract for furnishing the army with some certain provisions, while Sir Thomas K——, and my brother will share the greatest part of the profit. I hate these under-hand doings; these, I think, cannot be called *pious frauds*.

I know not how it is, but I have taken an invincible prejudice against this Baronet; I think he has in a great measure perverted the principles of my brother. It is not possible, that one man can always be in the right; but now my brother votes constantly with the minister; and obeys his summons as readily as if every thing depended on his obedience: indeed, poor man, he is obliged to strain every nerve to keep himself in his seat. Heaven knows whether it be better for our poor distracted country, that he should remain at the helm or not. But I wish for peace and quietness.

Alfred has acquired great credit with my mother, by sending her some natural curiosities. You would have been delighted to have seen her happy countenance,

nance, while she was examining them, one by one, through her spectacles. They are really beautiful; some of them being pebbles that exhibit almost a regular landscape. I have taken two or three draughts from their designs; which I shall send perhaps one day or other to Alfred; if not, they will remain locked up from mortal eye.

Heaven bless you, my dearest Maria,

I am ever most affectionately yours,

ELWINA,

L E T T E R XXXVII.

To the same.

YOU said a declaration of love would be the criterion by which you should judge of merit. I have then a formal declaration to send you of that sublime passion ; if you consider the persons and sentiments of the *inspirer* or *inspired*, you will be better enabled to judge how delighted your friend was on the occasion. It is a pity I cannot keep you in suspense a little longer ; but the secret must shew itself. It was not Al-

fred, my dear ; “ Oh no,” as Scrub says, “ clear another” sort of man.” What do you think of the great Sir Thomas K—— ? “ Aye,” you cry, “ *sits the* “ *wind in that quarter ?*” It is an ill wind indeed that blows good to none ; and I doubt this will prove such an one.

Certainly no surprise could equal mine : no, not more if my amiable friend had quitted that character to assume the lover ; though then my delight would have been somewhat greater. But for the declaration ; it was so much in my own way too, that it was particularly delightful on that account.

He called this morning, and my mother displayed to him her collection, which he has as much taste for, as I have for

him, or you for a cricket match. However the courtier was all admiration, and approbation : and then he begged to look at the conservatory ; which I, “ nothing loth,” not conceiving the political design of the Baronet, very good-humouredly offered to shew him. While we were examining the different plants ; and I was very busy in “ shewing the lions,” he stopped me in the midst of my description of the night-blowing Cereus, by snatching the hand *sacred to Alfred*, and pressing it with vehemence to his lips, uttered those words, which I think no music could make harmonious to my ears ; no hardly, if proceeding from the mouth of Alfred himself ; “ you are a sweet girl, and I love you.”

I drew

I drew my hand away, and looked at him with all the astonishment that really seized me.

“ You seem surprised, my dear Miss
“ B———,” again offering to take my
hand.

“ I am not a little so indeed,” I answered,
“ at your being possessed of such penetra-
“ tion to discover already qualities in me
“ to justify your partiality in my favour,
“ and the sudden avowal of it.”

“ Oh ! I saw your amiable disposition
“ in a moment ; and, as I had eyes, I saw
“ too your lovely person. I fixed in my own
“ mind, that I would never have any other
“ woman for my wife, the first time I was
“ in your company.”

" You do me a great deal of honour,
 " Sir Thomas, but"—— " You make
 " me the happiest of men ! I have not a
 " doubt of your father's concurrence ; and
 " my rent-roll will satisfy any views he
 " may have for you in the article of settle-
 " ment."

" This is proceeding too fast, Sir Tho-
 " mas ; there is something else necessary
 " to be settled first. That I was surpris'd
 " at your abrupt declaration, you plainly
 " saw ; but I am not dazzled by the
 " splendid establishment you offer
 " me. I hope the resolution you made
 " of having no other wife, will last no
 " longer than till I assure you that
 " honour can never be mine. Unpre-
 " pared as you have found me, I trust
 " you will have the goodness to excuse
 " the

“ the freedom and sincerity which I have
 “ used in declining your generous offer.
 “ There are many, and very amiable
 “ women, who may add sensibility to the
 “ rest of their charms; without which I
 “ am convinced you could receive no
 “ pleasure in a connection for life. Your
 “ acquaintance with me (for this is only
 “ the fourth time I have had the honour
 “ of seeing you) is too short to have made
 “ the impression (though perhaps a live-
 “ ly) a very deep one; therefore, the re-
 “ linquishing an idea, so lately taken up,
 “ and upon no foundation neither, I hope
 “ will not be a very difficult task.”

You see, Maria, by the tenor of my
 speech, I could not help bantering; but
 he, with his wonderful penetration, dis-
 covered it not. He began a kind of ha-

language which all rejected lovers of his description use ; and which I shall neither punish you or myself by repeating ; it concluded too as usual, complaining of cruelty and hardships, and trusting much to time, assiduity, perseverance, and a doleful &c. My replication too was quite in rule ; and such as has been used, time out of mind, by all *hard-hearted* damsels, whose affections are pre-engaged. However, that was a secret which I did not think my new slave intitled to be informed of ; and indeed there was a self-sufficiency and consequence in his manner, that by no means laid me under the necessity of softening my sentence, by gently hinting that

Had I earlier known thy matchless worth,
Thou excellent young man, &c.

Oh,

Oh, to be sure I would have made such a speech! Not I, believe me: no; I only wished him better success; and as a friend, advised him never to subject himself to a similar disappointment in future; but to trust more to judgment than fancy. At least that was the substance of my concluding argument, though I dressed it up with all the grace and elegance I could, as I led him towards the house; where he staid but a little time, and then took his leave, with a small abatement of that happy arrogance he generally assumes on most occasions.

Now you must know, I dare not say a word about this at home: I hope to heaven he will not tell my brother. I should think he would have no great *gusto* for recounting his discomfiture.

I am convinced my dear Maria is thoroughly assured I should have had grace to refuse Sir Thomas, if such a man as Alfred had never been called into existence. And I am assured too, that you would have condemned me, had I suffered a disengaged heart to be dazzled with his title and fortune. You know his character even better than I do. And with all my penetration, I cannot discover one estimable quality he is possessed of. But yet, I fear, he would have many attracting ones in the eyes of my family; particularly that part of it who are too much inclined to sacrifice to pomp and splendour all those dear little comforts so necessary to happiness.—I fancy my *friend* Alfred, though he wishes me so well, would not be very well pleased at such an establishment for me. I have a presentiment
the

the truth of the old song would then be proved ;

That friendship with woman, is sister to love.

If it is not the very thing itself.

Confess now, my dear Maria, that the continuation of my letter has disappointed the hope I raised in the beginning. Oh ! if that blest event had happened, I question whether the transport of my heart would have allowed me strength to have made a calm relation of the *said he's* and *said I's*. In the language of Clarissa Harlowe, and the rest of the novel Misses, I must have waited " for quieter fingers ; " as I suppose I should, according to ancient custom, have trembled like one of the shaking Mandarins on an old-fashioned chimney-piece.

Adieu ! most truly yours,

LETTER XXXVIII.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

I WOULD not return my amiable friend's books without a letter; not to apologize for having kept them so long; the terms we are upon, I hope, renders such formal business unnecessary; but to inquire when Mrs. M—— means to take this airing that you flattered me with an age ago; and which, if not put into execution soon, will be delayed too long, as we go up to town sooner than we intended. Pray use all your rhetoric on this occasion, as I look
back

back over so many worse than blank leaves in my pocket book, that my spirits are lowered by it.

Our Maria is now fixed in her habitation ; and I have the happiness of seeing her excellent father much improved in his looks. I laugh and tell him, that travelling has improved him wonderfully, and that I believe I shall become Maria's mamma. He has often declared he would never give her another, if I refused him. But whether I am at liberty or not I cannot absolutely determine ; for I must tell you a very important piece of news, which, as my friend, I am sure you will be much interested in : I have received a most splendid offer from your acquaintance Sir Thomas K——. “ Only think of that, “ Master Brook !” such settlements ! Oh!

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enough to turn the heads of half the girls in the kingdom. But for the sequel of the story, I must refer you to my next; for I have not time now to assure you how much I am, &c.

ELWINA.

LET-

LETTER XXIX.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

ON, Elwina, what have you done?
and what will become of the
wretched Alfred, whose misfortunes are
falling quick upon him ! In one fatal day
his worldly and mental prospects are
clouded over : they are blasted for ever !
Elwina, I am a beggar ! Ever unworthy
of the honour and happiness to which I
aspired, I but the moment before I re-
ceived your letter, which has sealed my
doom—I had but the moment before just
strength of mind enough to rejoice that I
had,

had, though so painfully, placed a padlock on my lips, and never told you how dear, how inexpressibly dear, you were to my fond heart, which might have prevailed on you to pity me, and perhaps generously have promised you would one day be mine. Now, Elwina ! dear, much loved Elwina, you are free from every engagement. May you be blest ! And I add to that prayer, which comes with sincerity from my bursting heart, may Alfred never, by making his miseries known, interrupt your happiness.

Now does the curse of my grandfire begin to operate. I never felt it till now ; it never fell upon me till this wretched day !

I am

I am distracted ! I know not what I write, or for what purpose ! You will not be able to understand my meaning. Dr. Taylor has refused to resign the rectory to me ; I have had counsel on the matter, but find there is no redress, as I am not in possession of any written agreement between Mr. Nelson and him. Indeed it is his own defence, that there never was one ; and the heirs of Mr. Nelson disclaim their knowledge of any such document being found among his papers. But oh ! Elwina, what is the loss of worldly wealth to him who has lost every thing in losing her whom his soul adored ? Fond, foolish, self-deceived heart ! why didst thou give thyself up to the flattering hope that thou hadst sufficient interest in the bosom of the almost divine Elwina, to prevent her giving thee up for another : and
that

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that one so very unworthy of her! But,
alas! who is worthy of her? Am I, an
outcast---a beggar! I will fly from you;
you shall never more see or hear from the
wretched, ruined, lost

ALFRED.

LET,

L E T T E R XL.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

TOO credulous; too apprehensive
 Alfred! Is Elwina a woman to be-
 stow her hand without her heart? And is
 she yet so little known to you? Oh! do
 her more justice: do yourself more justice.
 Has then insensibility marked her brow,
 that you could not read her sentiments of
 Alfred? Or have my letters been so cold
 as to create a doubt that he did not pos-
 sess, indeed all the interest he could wish
 in Elwina's heart?

Could but my Alfred: yes, though un-
 authorized, I will yet call you so; could
 but my Alfred have seen the agitation of
 my bosom, on reading his dear melancholy,
 and

and half-distracted letter, he would yet find this comfort cling round his wretched heart, that the world contains not a being half so dear to me as Alfred. Why must the real sentiments of our hearts be made known to each other at such a sad moment, but to cheer us in this reverse of fortune? Oh! then if it is any consolation to the most amiable, most esteemed (away with the inexpressive term, we have used it too long), the most loved of men, assure yourself the hand of Elwina shall never be given to any other man than Alfred.

I hate my levity in having written in so trifling a manner of the offer from the ever-detested Sir Thomas K——. But you know you always talked of friendship alone; and I could not resist a little female

male folly, which has torn the heartstrings of a man who is the only one of his sex that is dear and estimable to me ! I sent for my dear Maria, and have got the letter I wrote to her on the subject of this offer ; it will prove to you how dear Alfred is to me.

Be not then cast down, my excellent, my more than friend : we are yet young, and fortune may do something for us. At least let us have the happiness of cherishing the idea, that we were born to form each other's felicity ; and that many years will not elapse before that period arrives when our hopes may be accomplished. What are riches compared to happiness ; the happiness which I feel (to the exclusion of every care) of being beloved by Alfred !

ELWINA.

LETTER. XLI.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

MISFORTUNES falling so thick upon me, certainly bereft me of my senses, or I should not have dared to write to the most adored of women in such a style. But reason and reflection have restored me. Yes, my beloved Elwina, thy Alfred shall never take a base advantage of your angelic goodness; nor steal into your gentle affections, to betray you to misery. I can support my own share of wretchedness; but who shall give me strength to bear that which I should excite in her, who is dearer to me than the vital air I breathe? How shall

shall I ever repay, even a part of the obligation I owe you? Oh! am I then so blest as to be beloved by Elwina! Will not that dear consideration repay every unfortunate event in my life, with double and treble satisfaction? Most assuredly it ought, and will, when I can sufficiently regulate my desires by the rules of prudence.

Am I not punished, my Elwina, for my too eager wishes after a competency, such as might authorize me to offer my hand to the loveliest of her sex? I looked forward to the time, which would put me in possession of such a competency, as if there was no other object in the world. It is taken from me, and all my fond hopes, too much indulged hopes, are over-blown for ever! My dear mother too: Oh! Elwina, how would you pity her! The dis-

appointment of her darling son fits more heavily on her heart than anything she has yet experienced. Affections grow proportionably stronger (as weighty bodies increase in ponderosity), as they descend. Her love for me is of the most exquisite kind; as every relative duty and affection centres in me alone. All I can say on the occasion (for I have not words to describe what we felt), is that my distress could only be equalled by hers. She has been striving ever since to obtain my consent in order for the disposal of her second annuity. But I have solemnly sworn if she does, so far from availing myself of her mistaken generosity, I will seek out some means of living, where she shall never hear from me.

Oh!

Oh ! my Elwina, I have been obliged to talk in this cruel and unfilial manner to the best of mothers; to prevent her reducing herself to beggary, that she might add a few more comforts to my life; which would be for ever embittered with the reflection of suffering a parent, like the pelican, to tear away her vitals to support me !

I cannot yet form any plan for my future establishment, or how I shall improve the single talent placed in my hands : only this I am determined upon, not to enter the pale of the church.

I may now venture to tell you, what I before would scarce whisper to myself, that had I been allowed a choice, the

gown would never have been the election of my heart. Yet, I trust, I should have done my duty, though pressed into the service, as well as if I had been a volunteer. Happily, both from education and natural principles, besides having good examples and excellent precepts, I should not have found the task a difficult one which had been allotted for me, by those who had a right to settle me as they pleased. I could easily have conformed to all the ordinances of the church, and was resolved to do credit to the character of a parish priest. But the case is entirely changed. My whole prospect now is bounded by the possession of a country curacy of perhaps forty pounds a year, in a distant village; where no society, congenial to the sphere of life I have been accustomed to, can be procured, but

at the expence of my probity and principles: I now and then might be admitted to a great 'squire's table, to listen, if I did not join in licentious discourse and illiberal reflections. No, Elwina, the man who once aspired to the dear delight of calling you by the fondest and tenderest of all titles, shall never thus debase himself! I am but just in the prime of youth; the world is all before me; the field of glory is open; my country calls for the exertion of her sons! In the vineyard of the Lord, there are too many useless labourers already; Alfred shall not add to the number.

But whither has the exuberance of my fancy carried me? How much beyond the sober limitations of reason! Can I, in pursuit of the visionary scheme my imagination was this moment filled with,

can I trample over the dying bosom of my honoured, my only parent? And can I be insensible to the horror which seized her when I even hinted my predilection for arms? Unhappy Alfred, every way! What shall I then turn my thoughts to? Perhaps time may soften the terrors which at present seem so dreadful to my mother's feelings: I must not, however, decide at present. Let me then quit all consideration of to-morrow, and look up to my angelic Elwina; and in contemplation of her excellence and sweetness, lose all reflection, but that one, that I am dear to her. How exquisitely kind to send me those two letters you had so lately written to *our* Maria! What consolation to my almost broken heart! Oh, Maria, kind and tender Maria, soothe all the sorrows that invade the heart of my gentle love! So
 may

FOR FATHERS. 199

may thy bosom never know a grief or feel
a misfortune, in the thousandth degree
equal to those, which in spite of reason, re-
ligion and philosophy, at this moment
tear the heartstrings of

ALFRED.

LETTER XLII.

ELWINA TO ALFRED.

I HARDLY know in what words to address my Alfred, that may have the happy means of soothing to peace his care-shaken bosom. But I will not have you despair, my most excellent friend. Surely some path may be struck into, from whence you will yet find a prospect which leads to happiness.

What is grandeur, what are riches ? Do we see the possessors happy ? No, my Alfred,

fred, their cares and anxieties are drawbacks on their felicity, and which those who live in a middle state are not liable to. These observations are so common, that you must have made them often. Yet, perhaps, now you see yourself deprived of a more than comfortable subsistence; like summer friends, they fly from you---Oh, that thy Elwina had a fortune to prove to her heart's chosen how dear he is to her! Alas, she has no other way than by words, which even the insincere may use, to convince her Alfred how much she is devoted to him. But he knows he may rely upon her. Yes, that conviction supports me. My faith, my truth, are yours, and whatever is your station in life, I swear to share it!

How much do I lament (and Heaven

grant we have not cause to regret it for ever!) that my Alfred's timidity prevented him from making a declaration of the love he bore Elwina some time since to my father. Your prospect of future establishment, and the growing partiality-I was delighted to behold in almost each part of my family towards you, would have sufficiently operated in our favour, to have obtained his consent for an union. Then, from a sense of honour, my father would have ratified an agreement, which now I almost fear, from prudential motives, he would refuse to your request. But he will be content with a negative voice; and I shall never be tired of repeating, that I will never be the wife of any other than Alfred.

The persuasion that we were born for
each

each other is all that keeps hope alive. And if our union should not be perfected in this world, the Being that formed our congenial souls, will proportion our joys in heaven to those we shall miss on earth. Will not this reflection convey some consolation to the bosom of Alfred? I beseech you to let it have weight with you, to enable you to bear up against this trial of your constancy. Consider it in no other light than that it will serve to prove the strength of our affection, and that we shall be rewarded at last. I am determined to pursue the doctrine I teach, and will resume my former vivacity that I may increase yours.

Shall I not soon have the happiness of seeing you in Bedford Square? We go thither the end of the week; or should you
 K 6 like

like better to come here? Why should the reverse of fortune cause any alteration in your conduct? I trust you will find no difference in the behaviour of your acquaintance, or those you have honoured with the appellation of your friends.

Our kind Maria has been every thing your affectionate heart could wish her. She has been a second Alfred for tenderness. Oh, that we were all together! In so sweet a society I should forget there was any thing wanting; or rather what could be wanting to constitute the happiness of your ever faithful, ever affectionate

ELWINA.

LET-

LETTER XLIII.

ELWINA TO MARIA.

Bedford Square.

MY dearest Maria, I have once more seen the most beloved of the sons of men. He came this morning—my mother was from home; and as he only asked for her and me, he was shewn into the little drawing room. Oh, how my heart fluttered when James told me who was below. However, by waiting I could not have gained more composure, and I flew down as fast as I could, not staying for the form of being announced, lest the servant should observe more than I wished. Oh! good God, how did I find him altered!

Maria,

Maria, your gentle heart would have melted, had you seen the havock grief had made in his sweet face. I held out my hand; for the world I could not speak. He pressed it to his lips, and I felt his tears drop upon it. I endeavoured to extract courage from his weakness, and as I led him to a seat, tenderly chid him for giving way to grief, when he should, like me, look forward to fairer prospects, and enjoy the present moment, which had given us the felicity of seeing each other uninterrupted. "How will your dear mother, "how can your Elwina, be able to support this excess of melancholy in their "equally beloved Alfred?" Alas! the more I strove to cheer him, the less effect it seemed to have; and if I had not exerted all the strength I had, I should have followed his example. But I knew it

was not a time to waste in unavailing tears. With as much firmness as I could muster, I said to him, after some pause, “ Alfred, “ what would you have me do? I hope “ and believe I may trust your honour and “ affection as guardians of mine. I have “ by my pen, and I now with my lips at- “ test Heaven to listen to my sacred vow of “ being yours alone. I have said-I will “ share your fortunes let them be what “ they may. Every thing but dishonour “ and disgrace, which your conduct will “ never expose me to, I will brave with “ courage for your sake. What is there “ consistent with innocence, which Elwina “ would not do to restore peace to the “ wounded bosom of her amiable Alfred?”

“ Oh! cried he, I ought rather to wish “ you had never seen me; had it not been “ for

“ for me, my Elwina would not have had
 “ cause for shedding such precious tears,
 “ which contradict the semblance of forti-
 “ tude she kindly assumes to support me.
 “ Believe me, most adored Elwina, the
 “ bitter reflection that my misfortunes
 “ are shared with you and my beloved
 “ mother, so far from lessening, only
 “ sharpens the arrow of adversity, and
 “ makes grief rankle deeper in my bosom.
 “ Why am I doomed to give anguish to
 “ those so dear to me? It is there I feel
 “ myself weak—weaker than the weakest
 “ woman.”

I assured him no circumstance should
 ever have power to make me cease blef-
 sing the hour that first brought me ac-
 quainted with his worth. And that he
 might rest satisfied, that the first moment
 which

which made me mistress of myself, should unite me to him if he should then request it.

“ Good God! he exclaimed, how should
 “ I dare to accept your lovely hand, and
 “ draw down ruin and poverty upon you!
 “ No, Elwina, I am not yet so lost to a
 “ sense of honour. My purpose is—how
 “ shall I speak it?—to absolve you from
 “ your fatal too rash vow.” He rose and
 went to the window; his voice was almost
 choked with sobs; I was too much over-
 come to articulate a word. After a minute
 or two he a little recovered himself, and
 strove to attain a degree of composure;
 then coming up to me, and taking my
 hand, “ My amiable Elwina,” said he, “ a
 “ consciousness of acting right will sup-
 “ port us through every exigence. I, alas!
 “ have

“ have no other way to enable me to com-
 “ bat evils, which I have in no shape
 “ brought on myself.

“ I am the victim of a curse ! Can I
 “ then make *you* the partner of my for-
 “ tune ? Shall I, too generous Elwina,
 “ avail myself of your affection to ex-
 “ pose you to poverty and distress ? Oh !
 “ ~~no~~—Though giving up the dear hope of
 “ having such a companion through life, is
 “ worse than the keenest dagger to my
 “ heart, I must—I must do it !—Yes,
 “ Elwina ! dear lovely Elwina—Alfred,
 “ the most forlorn of men, pronounces it,
 “ while it tears his vitals—You are forever
 “ free.”

“ Am I then renounced for ever, Al-
 “ fred ?” I asked in an agony I could no
 longer

longer restrain or conceal. "Is it your advice that I should forget you?"

"Yes," he replied, "if by forgetting me you can forget the unhappiness I have occasioned."

"It is impossible; but you say I am free. I asked not your concurrence when I made the vow, which is long since registered in heaven, and there it shall ever remain to manifest against any breach of my faith. But tell me, Alfred, have you made a vow, that if any reverse of fortune was to take place, you will never unite your fate with Elwina's?"

"Can my Elwina think me such a wretch? The honour which impels me to leave *you* free, binds *me* ten thousand times closer. Never shall the vows of your

" Alfred

“ Alfred be paid at any other shrine than
 “ where he first offered them—You are
 “ my first, my last, my only love. No-
 “ thing shall ever sever you from my heart:
 “ it is devoted to you for ever. But I
 “ have no other method of proving my-
 “ self worthy of the high honour I once
 “ aspired to, than thus convincing you
 “ your happiness and welfare is dearer to
 “ me than my own.”

“ There can be no happiness---I can
 “ wish for none, which you do not share.
 “ Let me have still the comfort of cherish-
 “ ing my tenderness for you. Do not ren-
 “ der me miserable by urging me to give
 “ you up. I will not take any step that
 “ even the hard-judging world would call
 “ imprudent. I will not act against my
 “ duty to my parents. Be you not then
 “ more

" more severe than they would be. They
 " would not restrain my thoughts and
 " wishes ; nor will my amiable Alfred do
 " so when he is convinced, which, surely,
 " he must be, that all my happiness de-
 " pends on the hope of being one day his,
 " or at least of preserving his image sacred
 " in my bosom till I descend into my
 " grave."

I gained my cause at last, my dear Ma-
 ria, and I am certain sent my Alfred away
 much more at ease (notwithstanding the
 philosophical and unnatural plan he set
 out upon was intirely overthrown) than he
 has been for some time past.

I would not part with him, till he had
 promised to dine with us one day next
 week ; I wish to see how he is received. I re-
 peat

peat to you as I wrote to him; I shall never cease regretting his backwardness. Had he been received as a lover some months since, I know my father has such a sense of honour, he would not have thought the alteration in Alfred's circumstances a sufficient plea for a breach of promise, and then some interest might have been employed, which perhaps would have brought this unjust Dr. Taylor to terms of compromise at least.

I have intreated Alfred to talk the *matter* over to my father. Not of our affection, Maria, but of this treacherous business. No, that other must rest, at least for a good while. Well—we are young—and ten years hence we shall not be old. Oh, how swiftly would ten years glide away, if I was certain I should spend the remainder of my life with Alfred !

After dinner I told my mother who had called and left a compliment for her. She inquired very kindly after his health. My father too spoke very good-naturedly of his disappointment, and asked me what plan he had fixed on: I replied, I had taken the liberty of assuring him our family would be happy in his company one day at dinner, which he accepted, and said he should be happy in having an opportunity of consulting with Mr. ——— on that subject.

“What does he suppose my father can do?” asked my brother.

“The advice of a person who has seen the world,” I answered, “can never be unacceptable to a young man who would be happy in following it.”

“Aye,

“ Aye, aye, said my father, he is right ;
“ I shall be glad to see him at all times.”

I could have kissed him out of mere gratitude, and my poor heart felt lighter the remainder of the day, which has enabled me to sit up to a late hour, in order to give you an account of our melancholy conference.

Adieu, my beloved Maria, If your wishes could succeed for us, I am well assured we should be the happiest, as we will (I am determined on my side at least) be the most faithful pair in the world.

Yours most sincerely,

E L W I N A.

LET -

LETTER XLIV.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

WHAT became of all my stoicism and resolution, which I bore with so much anguish to Bedford Square? Before the lovely Elwina, they were quickly lost. No, my adorable girl, I was no longer able to oppose your generosity; and I feel so much happier than I did yesterday, that I am almost inclined to think you have taken the wiser part.

My dear mother observed with pleasure how much better I looked when I returned, than I did when I quitted her this morning. Elwina, you are hardly dearer to me than you are to her: she says (and, oh! may she be prophetic) “that such love and

“constancy as yours must be rewarded ;” and her partial affection thinks no one so qualified to reward it as the highly-honoured Alfred.

I will certainly dine with you next Monday, if you on mature deliberation forbid it not. Mrs. M—— is so good as to say she will take me in her hand ; and, I think, it will be a relief to have her countenance the first time the humbled Alfred approaches your father and mother.

Oh, my beloved, when I saw the elegance and splendour of your house, how my poor heart sunk at the idea of drawing you from thence, to unite you to poverty ! But, indeed, I had taken up the resolution before I set off from home, of strengthening your heart to enable it to renounce me. What a false heroism ! You,

my angelic Elwina, have convinced me. Yet no power shall ever prevail on me to accept your noble generous offer, till I can lift you to an eminence something higher than I have yet to share with you. My mother conceives hopes from Mr. Harley, the younger brother of my unhappy father ; she is resolved to apply to him. My heart, was it not filled with your dear image, would reject the measure with scorn,—with an honest scorn. But I wave all considerations of pride : though I will not be meanly condescending, even to obtain Elwina. No, she shall not have the mortification of thinking she has honoured an unprincipled wretch with her affection and pity.

My uncle may have some interest (if he will not consider me in the light of his

eldest brother's only child) that may be serviceable to me in procuring me a place under government, which is the hope of my mother ; but I will not give way to sanguine expectation ; and yet how prone is youth to dress up a fond idea till we almost think the shadow is become substantial ; and then when we extend our arms to embrace the phantom, it dissolves in air, leaving " not a wreck behind." Yet why should I complain ? For, where my treasure is, I am secure. On the faith of my Elwina I rely with confidence. How could I ever form the cruel idea that I should be happier if you had forgot me ? Oh, no ! all my bliss depends on your affection, and rich in that I cannot be poor. That cordial drop of happiness will sweeten the cup of life to the very dregs. Heaven would not have inspired such tenderness

ness but to reward it, and I shall yet be happy with my adored Elwinâ.

For ever, for ever yours wholly,

A L F R E D.

L E T T E R XLV.

E L W I N A T O M A R I A.

YOU would not have expected, my dear Maria, to be addressed by me from L——, but so it is. On Saturday I received a very friendly letter from Mrs. M—— to say she would dine with us on Monday, and should request the favour of my company to pass a week with her, for she should be quite forlorn, as her youngest boy was then to go to school ; “ and you “ know,” she adds, “ what a foolish creature

“ I am—I shall cry my eyes out if you do
“ not comfort me, and scold me too, both
“ which you are well qualified to do. I
“ shall take no denial. So you must have
“ your matters ready packed up, and which
“ we take in the coach. To obviate
“ every fear of danger of our purses, I
“ shall bring Alfred to guard us.”

This plea my father could not resist ;
you know he has a high regard for Captain
M——, and wishes to shew every civility
to his wife. Alfred wrote me word he
should dine with us, and Mrs. M——
would convey him thither ; but he knew
nothing of the improved part of the
plan till evening. It was a sweet moon-
light night, and I had the happiness of
contemplating that beauteous planet at the
same moment he did. I had the further
pleasure

pleasure too of half an hour's conversation with him when we arrived at L——, for Mrs. M— ran directly to the nursery; where, indeed, she shines with the utmost credit, if she did not spoil the little creatures.

This morning Alfred fetched me to visit his dear mother. How much did her affectionate manner soften me! how inexpressibly sweet were the tears we mingled together! "Oh, my beloved children," said she, taking each of our hands, "may ye
 " be blest in each other, and may the
 " Being that formed you shed his benign
 " influence over your heads, and strew
 " your path with flowers that never grew in
 " mine, or at best just shewed themselves
 " to *bloom and fade*."

My dear Maria, had but the united blessings of my own dear father and mother been added, how freely would your Elwina have given up all the pomp and bustle of the world. A humble cottage, with a sufficient quantity of land to supply my family, and my Alfred to share my little comforts, would be the boundary of my wishes. The only alloy would be the fear lest he should not be so unambitious as myself. I should fear for him, or else, could we not on the interest of our fortunes (for I suppose my father would give me the same portion he did Matilda)—could we not then on the interest of six thousand pounds find resources even for little elegancies? How often, through a sleepless night, have I formed estimates of the expences that would come within three hundred a year! I could be content. Oh, how poor a word is that,

how

how inadequate to the happiness an union with Alfred upon these terms would give me ! Yet for a man of his elegant education to be sunk into a little farmer, and, perhaps, be despised by beings every way but one his inferiors—Oh, if that should happen to wound his spirit, then I should be a wretch indeed. No, then, let us remain as we are ; while I am assured of his tender affection I am blest, and I will not incur the censure of my own heart, by risking the loss of the world's esteem. My affection is laudable while it is under the direction of prudence ; nor will I swerve from its dictates, while it enjoins not the renunciation of Alfred. He is, he ever shall be dear to my heart—I will never give him up—No, no, Maria, no force or power shall ever make me resign Alfred, who (with yourself) is so inexpressibly dear to the

Ever faithful

ELWINA.

LETTER XLVI.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

WHAT a week of exquisite felicity have I passed ! And is it possible Mrs. M—— should not suspect my ardent passion, and that the adored Elwina has allowed me sometimes to speak of it ? I could hardly think it any other than illusion. How will the remembrance of this happy week enrich all my future hours ! it will soften the asperity of my disappointment, even if my mother's application, the answer to which we are hourly expecting, should prove fruitless. And yet how can I rave thus ? If that application succeeds, it may lead to my enjoying, not only weeks, but years, long years of the greatest

greatest happiness that can fall to the lot of man. Oh! my Elwina, it may lead me to your dear arms; and repay, in one soft moment, all my sufferings! But I dare not give way to that hope, the accomplishment of which, I think, would nearly deprive me of my senses from exquisite transport. I will check my pen, if I cannot my ardour; which I doubt my ever delicate and sweet Elwina would condemn. And yet your own heart is not more pure than the passion you have inspired in the bosom of your ever faithful

ALFRED.

L E T T E R XLVII.

ELWINA TO MARIA.

I AM now returned to town, my dearest Maria, after passing a week, which wanted only the sanction of my dear father and mother, and a prospect, though even a distant one, of being united to my Alfred, to have been the happiest I ever enjoyed. Oh! my friend, how much has he risen in my esteem and affection, for his conduct since I have so openly declared how dear he is to me! Such delicacy, such tenderness, and so much goodness of heart, as have rivetted me still closer to him!

You

You perhaps will be surpris'd (yet I do not think you will condemn me) when I tell you I have not made Mrs. M—— my confidant. I should think I paid an ill compliment to my family, if I suffered other people to know my engagements before they even suspected an attachment. You, my love, are my second self, and as well I might endeavour^d to conceal my intentions from myself, as from your penetration: nay, it would be an injury to your merit, and my sense of it. But Mrs. M—— is quite another thing. She shall not incur blame by and by, for encouraging a clandestine correspondence, as this may be styled, should it meet the disapprobation of my parents; and as yet she is free from blame, for I verily believe she does not see his attachment; though how he avoids betraying it to her,

I can-

I cannot tell; for without oppressing one with his ardent gazing, I know not how it is, but his eyes are never off me. One thing is in our favour, she hardly ever looks at any person unless they speak to her, her children engrossing most of her attention.

I was excessively abashed one day, by a very trifling incident, but it passed off tolerably. Alfred had the morning before been playing with little Henrietta, who is a sweet child, not four years old. I sat at the other end of the room. He kissed the child, and out of a *galant badinner*, bid her carry it with his love to Elwina. She ran immediately to me to deliver the message, which, you may be sure, I accepted, with all the playful mirth it deserved. As I said, the following afternoon,

noon, there happened to be company, and I was engaged at cards. Alfred, who had cut out, was, with his little playfellow, in a window, where he had placed himself, that he might see me without being observed. A kiss was again given to Henrietta ; when, with the most infantine naivetè, she looked up in his face, saying, “ Pray “ Sir, shall I carry this kiss to Elwina ? ” Oh ! I suppose no crimson exceeded the hue of Alfred’s cheeks. Mine, I fancy, from the glow I felt, was pretty near the same tinge : yet, notwithstanding, I could hardly forbear laughing at the beautiful simplicity of the dear child, and the look she gave him. “ A pretty little proxy “ you have got, madam,” said a gentleman, who was playing with me. “ But “ if I was Alfred, I would deal only with “ principals.” There was not much more
said

said on the occasion; but the delicacy of Alfred was wounded, lest it should be suspected that he had taken a liberty not consistent with our situation.

I assure you they have not been idle in town since I left them to themselves. Isabella has had a very good offer from a Mr. G——, who is pretty high in the profession of the law, and is a great friend to my brother George, and as great a favourite with Clodio. I have seen him once or twice at our grand dinners at H——; and I think him a sensible well-behaved man. I am not clear as to her sentiments of him, but hope she has no doubts herself.

She has accepted him, and though so little time has passed away since the declaration—

claration, they talk of the business being concluded by Easter, after he has been the circuit.

I hope, my beloved Maria, your good father feels no return of his complaints; I much fear this cold weather will make him confess himself still an invalid.

“The spring should be warm:” But it is not as it should be, for it is dreadfully cold. Adieu! my dear—no change of climate, weather, or any thing else, can change the true regard with which I am

Yours,

ELWINA.

LET-

L E T T E R XLVIII.

MARIA TO ELWINA.

INDEED, my dearest friend, I wish most cordially you had the sanction of your father (your mother's, I am sure, would follow of course) in your engagement to Alfred. It is a most solemn one you have entered into. That the object is worthy your highest regard, I know full well; but, my dear girl, where is the prospect of your ever being able to fulfil it, without ruin to yourself?

I wept over the estimates you say you have made in many a sleepless night. My Elwina, they are false estimates which
would

would plunge you in painful exigencies ! How can you fancy you shall be content ; nay, happy you say you shall be, deprived of so many luxuries, which, from frequent use and long habit, are, unfortunately for too many, become the necessaries of life ? And yet my visionary friend has contracted every thing within the limitation of three hundred a year : and that *splendid* income too, on the still more visionary hope, that your father will ever consign you to such a state of comparative indigence, and give you the portion he allots for such daughters as marry equal to his views. Oh, my excellent friend, do not blindly follow so imperfect and delusive a guide as romantic fancy !

This counsel, I am convinced, my Elwina would not fail to bestow on her Maria,

ria, did she see her pursuing the same trackless path, covered with thorns and briars, and encompassed with pit-falls.

Consider, my dear, I am a little qualified to judge how hardly a life of comparative poverty is supported by those who have been accustomed to the pomp and vanities of the world. But how much more should I feel my change of situation, if I was surrounded by a little family : and such, most likely, will be your case. Then to have all your prospects repressed by “chill penury ;” and (for we know not how such struggles may sour the sweetest tempers) perhaps be exposed to the misery of seeing your beloved Alfred repining at the obscurity of his life, when even in all the vigour of enjoying the pleasures of
the

the world, a too hasty indulgence of inclination has for ever secluded him from them !

· Weigh but these reflections, my beloved Elwina ; turn them but for a moment in your mind, and what will be the result ? Oh, my dear ! even you can hardly feel more on the representation, than does your ever faithful and affectionate

MARIA.

L E T T E R XLIX.

ELWINA TO MARIA.

WHAT a subject for a drawing in the sombre shade has my dearest Maria given me ! I almost blotted out your letter

letter with my tears ; but I have not washed away the excellent warning contained in it. No, my Maria, it has sunk on my heart, and impressed it with the deepest gratitude for the kindness which induced you to place so melancholy a picture before me. But happily, my dear, I hope the evils you hint at (and which I own I am not so romantic but that I see too plainly would be bad to bear, and dangerous to hazard) will not fall so heavily as you predict. And with true thankfulness I offer my acknowledgments to Heaven, for having a little enlivened the prospect to my view, before your letter reached me !

Yesterday morning my mother came into the powder-room, while my maid was dressing my hair, and desired, as soon, as that was finished, I would defer the rest of
my

my dressing, as she wanted to have a little conversation with me. I thought I saw a solemnity in her manner, though she did not look angry ; but you know

Conscience makes cowards of us all.

And I began to entertain some unpleasant surmises which I dreaded to hear confirmed; but yet not to keep her waiting, I hurried Jenny as much as I could. I pulled off my powdering gown, and attended my mother into her dressing room, with my knees trembling as I descended the stairs.

“ Elwina,” said she, “ your father is both surprised and displeased at finding you have refused an offer of marriage from Sir Thomas K——.”

“ Surely,

“ Surely, madam, he will not be dis-
“ pleased when he knows I felt so invin-
“ cible a dislike to Sir Thomas, that to
“ have accepted him, would have made
“ me miserable.”

“ I cannot tell that, my dear; yet I
“ hope your father would never wish to
“ lay a restraint on the inclination of his
“ children, much less force them. I own,
“ Sir Thomas would not be the man of
“ my choice, any more than yours; yet
“ you should not have rejected him with-
“ out giving him a chance of improving
“ on you by a nearer acquaintance; at
“ least, that is what your father is dis-
“ pleased with you for.”

“ Ah! my dear mother, but not to
“ have peremptorily refused such a man
“ as

“ as Sir Thomas, would have been en-
 “ couraging him to believe that time
 “ would have made an alteration in my
 “ sentiments favourable to him ; which
 “ could never, never be. Besides, our
 “ acquaintance was so extremely short,
 “ that the disappointment of such slender
 “ hopes could not affect a man of his
 “ principles longer than the time which
 “ the conference took up.”

“ He declares himself exceedingly at-
 “ tached to you.”

“ As any other new face would attach
 “ him ; and perhaps for no longer a
 “ period. He is known to have connec-
 “ tions with several women ; and actually
 “ has one to whom he allows a fixed esta-
 “ blishment. But that I have nothing to

“do with. I would not, I could not,
“marry him for the world.”

“Elwina, my dear, will you allow me
“to ask you one question?”

I bowed assent. “These are certainly,
“to a girl of your sense and delicacy, very
“material objections; and which, nothing
“but making false estimations (making
“false estimates my dear Maria, is in the
“family way you see) of the worth of
“titles and riches, could have made your
“father and brother overlook. I doubt,
“and I am sorry to say it, Isabella would
“not have refused him on that score; for
“I have heard but an indifferent charac-
“ter of Mr. G—— for morality, and
“she knows it too. I am convinced you,
“my love, would not risk your happiness
“with

“ with a libertine ; and therefore I believe
 “ from my soul, that, free from prejudice
 “ or partiality, you would have refused
 “ your hand to ‘ Sir Thomas, as a man
 “ you could neither love or honour.
 “ But, Elwina, to the point. Had he
 “ been a man of unblemished reputation,
 “ as to gallantry I mean, and otherwise
 “ perfectly respectable, would he then have
 “ been as steadily rejected ?”

“ Oh yes,” I answered quickly, “ in-
 “ deed he would ; I could not have mar-
 “ ried him ; I would have died first.”

“ My dear child, then there must be a
 “ powerful predilection in your bosom for
 “ some one else ?”

She fixed her eyes on me, as if she

meant to read all my soul; but at the same time, she had so much maternal affection in her manner, that I vowed to myself, she should indeed read my whole soul. I threw myself on my knees, and bursting into tears, was unable for a few minutes to articulate a sentence intelligibly; but her soothing careffes recovered me sufficiently to disclose every *iota* (as my father says) of my attachment; aye, and engagement too, to Alfred. She kindly lamented with me, the difficulties which the alteration of his circumstances might throw in the way of an union she had herself wished might take place, from the first of her acquaintance with him, from the parity of sentiment she saw between us. And from the conversations she had had with my father, she knew he would have given his consent with the
utmost

utmost satisfaction : that he sincerely regretted the loss Alfred had sustained, and had actually interested himself in endeavouring to oblige Dr. Taylor to do him justice. “ But you must not, my “ dear,” she added, “ flatter yourselves “ that now you will find the approving “ voice of your father. Alfred loses not “ an atom of his respectability by his reverse of fortune ; but he is no longer in “ a situation to support a family with “ common decency ; and you must allow “ that prudential motives alone would “ urge your father to withhold that consent now, which paternal affection would “ have inclined him then to grant.”

Here was too much sound argument for me to attempt a refutation of : I only said, “ I hoped I might still rely on the

“ parental love I had ever experienced,
 “ and which I hoped, too, I had never,
 “ even in this instance, abused; and that
 “ it would still operate so much in my fa-
 “ vour as to prevent a force being put on
 “ my inclinations: and I begged my
 “ mother to believe herself, and assure my
 “ father the same, that I would never
 “ take one step derogatory to my dutious
 “ regard for them both. I took occasion
 “ at the same time to do justice to the ho-
 “ nour and probity of my amiable Alfred,
 “ whose intention it was to have made
 “ that visit in Bedford-square the last in-
 “ terview between us; and nothing, but
 “ the conviction that his total absence
 “ must have been fatal in its conse-
 “ quences to me, could have tempted
 “ him to remain in England. But that
 “ we were contented to wait till some for-
 “ tunate

“tunate alteration of circumstances should
 “happen ; and I wanted nothing to com-
 “plete my felicity, but the assurances,
 “that if such a change should take place,
 “my father would, himself, bestow my
 “hand where my heart must ever remain
 “unalterably fixed; or, at least, that
 “he would not make me miserable, by
 “obliging me to act contrary to the duty
 “of a child in the article of obedience.”

My mother kindly undertook to be the
 mediatrix between my father and me; and
 as I really now wished to have no reserves,
 I gave her the letter I had written to you,
 wherein that interview was related, and
 which, when you returned Alfred's last
 letters to me, you had by chance packed
 up with them. To my father she instantly
 went. Oh ! my dear Maria, what were

my feelings during her absence ! In the words of my dear Alfred, I exclaimed, “ *The die is now cast !* and what the consequence will be, who shall tell ? Though my fond heart dares not indulge itself with the hope of approbation, Oh ! thou merciful Creator, spare thy poor and afflicted servant the cruellest of evils, reprobation !” In this tormenting state I remained for more than an hour. How dreadfully tedious did that hour appear ! and yet I trembled to that degree when I heard the door of my father’s study open, that I was very near fainting, and the first object I beheld was my father.

I had not strength to any more than sink down on my knees to him, and say,
“ Oh !

“ Oh, fir! oh, my dear father, will you
 “ forgive me?”

He raised me up immediately, and kissing my cheek, said, in a voice that sounded like the greetings of an angel to a poor afflicted dying wretch, “ Yes, my
 “ dearest Elwina, I do forgive you, and
 “ wish you happy. But remember the
 “ condition on which I do forgive you,
 “ and hold my sweet girl to the affectionate bosom of her father. I rely on
 “ you, my dear, to take no steps towards
 “ an union with Alfred, unless I give my
 “ free consent; and which I will not
 “ withhold, when he is in circumstances
 “ to maintain you. This, Elwina, is all
 “ the concession you ought to expect from
 “ me. But I will indulge you still more: Alfred shall ever be received here as a valu-

“able acquaintance ; and I give you leave
 “to correspond with him.”

Oh ! with what rapturous gratitude I embraced the honoured knees of my beloved father, and vowed on his dear hand a fixed obedience to his gentle commands. And now, my sweet Maria, your faithful Elwina is the happiest of all earthly beings : for to complete it, in the evening *my Alfred* (yes, by my father’s permission I may now call him so !) dropped in by chance. He came up to town to do some little business for Mrs. M——, and had the offer of a conveyance in a gentleman’s coach, which carried him down again this afternoon.

There were none of the family at home but my father, mother, and William,
 which

which made the scale of happiness still more in our favour.

Isabella was gone to the Opera with Mrs. A——, who is sister to Mr. G——, and George was of the party; my brother was at the house; in short, only congenial spirits were left at home.

When Alfred's name was announced (to me it was a needless ceremony—I would have sworn to the rap, which vibrated on my heart), my father said, “Before he goes, we will give you an opportunity of telling him on what conditions we shall be glad to see him.

You may be sure I laid hold on the first that offered. My mother asked me to play, and I was to be accompanied by Al-

fred and William. I went into the music room, giving him a look which he well understood, as a signal to follow me ; and in a few words I related to him what had passed ; but that there was no occasion to take notice of it in the drawing room, only to give me authority to assure my father he assented to the conditions. Maria, you would have concluded the dear creature mad with joy : I thought so by his actions, for he caught me to his bosom, and gave me such a kiss as I believe never was given before. But recollecting the freedom, as well as violence of the attack, he begged pardon very submissively ; and dropping on his knee, vowed by every thing sacred, he would never urge me to swerve in the smallest instance from the conditions which offered more happiness than any man could almost deserve.

“ No,

“ No, my Elwina, my own Elwina,” said he, “ Alfred shall be the guardian of thy honour and duty to the best of parents. He will not receive this dear hand but from them. And never shall his grateful heart cease to bless them for this even unlooked-for happiness !”

It was very likely we should play in tune after such an overture ; but we succeeded tolerably. Alfred staid supper : and I believe I may say, for many, many months, I never knew such peace of mind as this dear evening afforded.

But perhaps you will like to know how my rejection of the Baronet was discovered. I will inform you as well as I can ; but it will be a wretched *after-piece* to the *entertainment* I have already given you.

My

My brother dined at Weltjie's two days since, with a large party, Sir Thomas one of them. A gentleman who sat next my brother, said, "If you was not here, I would propose your sister as my toast."

"Which of them?" asked Clodio.

"Oh, Elwina! the beautiful Elwina, you may be certain."

"The cruel, too, you should add," said Sir Thomas. When they were coming away, my brother told him, he should set him down; and when they were seated in the carriage, he demanded an explanation of the epithet "cruel:" on which the discomfited knight related the whole of the *attack* and *defeat*, and lamented very much the disappointment of his

his wishes, swearing I was the finest girl he had ever seen, and he should have been the happiest fellow in the world. My brother was full of the *éclat* such an alliance would have given the family, for Sir Thomas has a sister married to an Earl (so I should have had a Countess for my sister in law); and what is still better, this Earl has a sister likewise, whose fortune being small, it is not improbable from the favourable representation I might make of my brother's good qualities, she might have been induced to do him the honour of taking him for an husband. "Here are wheels within wheels" without end, my dear Maria; and I doubt Clodio will not be pleased at the present arrangement, which has turned his *visionary schemes* bottom upwards. But for myself, I have no room for any thing but joy
and

and gratitude. My heart expands with each of those sentiments, and feels so easy, that it is quite delightful.

I hope some plan will be formed for the improvement of the *poor little single talent*, which, Alfred says, is committed to his charge. Surely, with such abilities, he may do something. All I have to fear, is the pride of my brother: or I have thought, among many other things, that, so well accomplished as he is, he might undertake the tuition of a few young men of family. I am sure, though I dare not whisper it here, I do not think the daughter of a grocer would be disgraced by such a marriage. However, you know we are styled the sisters of a Member of Parliament, and our present rank would
operate

operate against such a plan effectually, no doubt.

I think, my dear Maria, you will call this a pretty long letter. But I am sure you will rejoice with your friend at matters being so agreeably settled. Adieu! Heaven bless you.

Ever yours,

ELWINA.

LET-

L E T T E R L.

ALFRED TO ELWINA.

O H! my beloved Elwina, what rapture fills the heart of thy happy Alfred on this occasion, of writing to you under the sanction and permission of your most excellent father! Never shall I cease thanking Heaven for allotting me such a portion of felicity to sweeten each moment of my future life! To love, to adore Elwina, was but the natural consequence of being admitted to her divine presence and conversation: to be dear to her, was the highest of human happiness; but to be allowed, by the authors of her being, to tell her I adore her, and to receive the
in-

ineffable delight of hearing the sweet confession of mutual love ! Oh ! it lifts me above mortality ! It raises me to the heaven of heavens !

Forgive my rhapsodies, my sweetest Elwina ; but indeed such uncommon felicities call for uncommon expressions.

How much does my dear mother rejoice on the occasion of her son's restoration to happiness ! For even the certainty of my being beloved by my Elwina, left me but half blest, while it was thus necessarily kept secret : my soul disdains all mean and dark disguises ; and that the passion, which above all others most ennobles and dignifies the soul, should lead to dissimulation, is a degradation, and even a contradiction of terms.

Allowed

Allowed to love you, and sometimes to hear your sweet voice, with frequently, I hope, being blest with your charming letters; may I not wait with patience for the event that can only exceed my present bliss by rendering it permanent; at least as our lives! Yes, Elwina, I will wait for that blest hour, when the voice of your respectable father shall pronounce us one: when, from his honoured hand I shall receive my Elwina's, and be then the lawful protector, the undivided partner of her days!

My mother, who would know no happiness equal to that of seeing us united forever, has again written to Mr. Harley. I told you the reason of his not answering the former letter; which plea served for some time, but which should have made him

him the more eager to avail himself of the first opportunity of writing to her. But she is writing, to wave the etiquette, and means to mention my happy prospect of being united to the loveliest of women, to induce him to make a little reparation to the son, for the injury he did the father. My Elwina will join her prayers for success, with those of her Alfred.

I took your advice, as I will do in every thing, and informed Mrs. M—— of the honour I had received. That she was surprised, you will not discredit: but that she was displeased, I think you would, did any one but Alfred assert it.

She actually reddened, drew up, and looked more angry than I ever saw her, even with her servants. She assured me
how

how excessively ill she took your conduct in the matter; and had she known we had made her house a convenient place for carrying on such an affair, she would never have given the opportunity of being made such a *cat's paw*.

I vindicated both you and myself: I should say, I attempted it, for I left her unappeased at last, though in rather a better humour than I expected, from her first essay of passion. I felt piqued at some things she said, and therefore would not gratify her curiosity (which I could perceive was at work with her anger, and perhaps soon would have got the upper-hand) by informing her how the business had been brought about. She declared she would write to your mother; for after such a breach of friendship as we had both been guilty of,

she knew not how far we might be attempting to deceive her now. I shall beg my mother to go to-morrow morning strive to mitigate her wrath. I thank Heaven most heartily we do not stand in need of her friendship, or need fear her enmity: yet I should be sorry to lose her acquaintance, for I think she means well, though her understanding is not adapted to give her meaning always the right turn. I beg, my dear Elwina, you will mention her intention to your good mother, and prepare her for the reception of this *threatening*, or rather *threatened* letter; for it is very likely her passion may have evaporated in words, of which it had a much larger portion than sense; and she may with the morning, have given up the night's resolution. She is given to variableness very much; but you know she prides herself on never suffering

suffering *the sun to go down upon her wrath*, or, "bearing malice to her pillow." However, the first had been down a good while before her rage commenced, and she had hardly time to cool, before she took counsel of the last.

Good night, my dearest ; may I not say my betrothed Elwina? the future wife of the happy, thrice happy

A L F R E D.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



